SPECIAL ISSUE

The Nation.

AN ALTERNATIVE STATE OF THE UNION

PATHS TO RENEWAL

John Conyers

Bernie Sanders

Sheila Jackson Lee

Jan Schakowsky

Jesse Jackson Jr.

Dennis Kucinich

Henry Waxman

George Miller

and 12 others

FEB. 6, 2006
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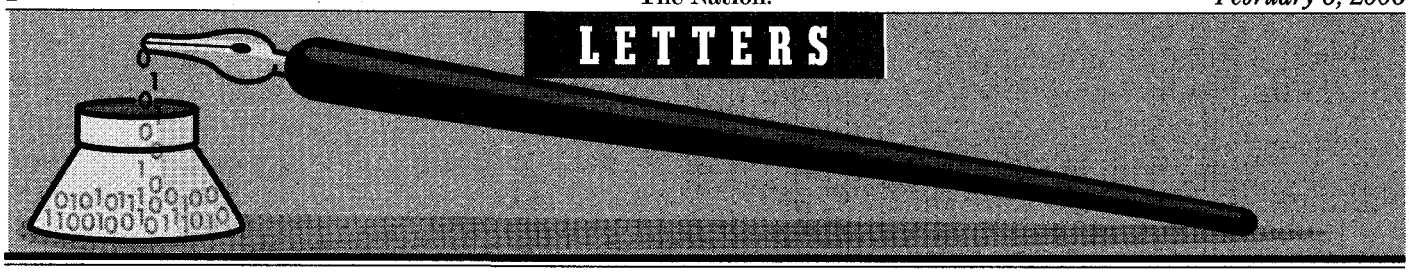

CHRISTOPH NIEMANN

FISA—NOT THE MAGNA CARTA

Cheverly, Md.

■ In the wake of the illegal wiretap scandal, Bush critics are invoking the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act like it's the Magna Carta. Actually, FISA is flawed legislation that imperils civil liberties and opens the door to abusive law enforcement. In the 1990s federal "anti-terror" agents secretly searched American homes and manipulated phone-tap data to prosecute people who obviously posed no terrorist threat. In the case of my husband, Kurt Stand, the government netted three domestic dissidents. Terrorism had nothing to do with it. The three harmless defendants are still serving draconian prison terms, and some of the evidence used to that end is still secret, its veracity unexamined. One more Bush outrage notwithstanding, let's not glorify the past. Janet Reno and Louis Freeh used highly dubious tools for highly dubious reasons, with Congressional authorization. The FISA Court went along. Instead of defending FISA, we should call for procedural reforms that will really protect individuals. LISA FOLEY STAND

GOODBYE 2005, HELLO 2006

Arlington, Va.

■ Katha Pollitt's 2005 retrospective, "It Wasn't All Bad," was outstanding ["Subject to Debate," Jan. 9/16]. You can sit around and groan about the year having been a train wreck, or you can take her perspective, which actually made me pretty happy. Living in Virginia, I found Number 8 (the decline of support for the death penalty) especially pertinent. Thankfully, my state saw fit to elect the anti–death penalty Tim Kaine to be governor. He beat his opponent, Jerry Kilgore, a run-of-the-mill Republican, in areas that even Mark Warner couldn't take four years ago, and that's with Kilgore trying to exploit Kaine's controversial stance on capital punishment. But as Pollitt suggests, citizens of many so-called red states, like Virginia, are beginning to see through the vacuous gesturing and are doing what's right for themselves and their country. 2005 did have its good moments. TYLER SONNICHSEN

THE GREAT G.M.'S

Kansas City, Mo.

■ As a Clean-for-Gene *soixante-huitard*, I came nearly to tears over George McGovern's perfect tribute ["Gene McCarthy," Jan. 2]. No one better to write it, and none better to read it than student warriors of that not-so-quixotic campaign who, with McCarthy's inspiration, awakened their world irreversibly. DAVID DUNLAP

SUPPORT OUR TROOPS—LEAVE IRAQ

Palisades Park, NJ

■ I am a mother of an American soldier (my only son and child) who currently has orders to go to Iraq. I have written to several Congressmen and Senators and pleaded with them to say no to the war and to stand up and demand an exit of our troops from Iraq. I keep getting the same response over and over. "We are doing our best to support the troops."

This is not a war—this is a suicide mission. The Iraqis do *not want* us there. We brought on more terrorism by going there. We (America) are more at risk now than ever for a terrorist attack. Our troops should be here at home protecting us and our borders.

I must say that at least some of the Senators and Congressmen had the respect to respond to my e-mails and letters. As for President Bush and Vice President Cheney, they act as though I don't even exist. That is the respect the President gives a soldier's mom: Just ignore them and they will go away. I will never give up the fight to bring our troops home.

If they all put themselves in my shoes for five minutes, then maybe they would rethink the war on Iraq and decide it's time to bring our troops home now! JOANN SOHL

NO WETLANDS, NO FLOOD SAFETY

Los Altos, Calif.

■ Thank you for Ari Kelman's article on post-Katrina reconstruction, "In the Shadow of Disaster" [Jan. 2]. As a structural engineer trained in postdisaster structural risk assessment, I spent a week in mid-October doing voluntary building inspections in Saint Bernard Parish, a community that had been built on a narrow strip of low-lying land between the levees containing Lake Borgne and the Mississippi River. What I saw there could not have been prevented even if the levees had all remained intact. People I spoke with claimed that the storm surge crested the top of the northern levees by more than twenty feet, flooding the entire parish in minutes.

The evidence I saw (ten-foot ceilings washed away to leave bare rafters adorned with swamp grass, entire houses floated off their foundations and left hundreds of yards away) certainly confirmed this claim. The 1.1 million gallons of oil added to the floodwaters by the nearby Murphy Oil Company didn't help matters.

The strongest levees on earth won't prevent a recurrence of this flooding because the wetlands that once acted as a buffer no longer exist. If we are truly interested in rebuilding New Orleans, we have to first rebuild the natural buffers that disappeared when the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet and Intercoastal Waterway were built. While the shipping industry has vowed to protect these artificial waterways (which effectively acted like funnels to further exacerbate the storm-surge damage), it was their creation that allowed salt water from the Gulf to pour in and eventually kill thousands of acres of marshland. Any plan that does not include restoring the natural buffers will do nothing to prevent a recurrence of the disaster we're still trying to deal with. ADAM L. NYE

GYPSY JAZZMAN: CLEARING THE MYTH

Minneapolis

■ Thank you for David Yaffe's review of my biography of Gypsy jazzman Django Reinhardt ["Soul on Ice," Dec. 5]. I'm sorry my prose so disappointed him; it often disappoints me as well. The most difficult part of writing on a storied figure like Django is sorting myths from facts; with Yaffe's review we now need to dispel his freshly minted myth that Django's mother was Jewish. Yaffe writes that this essential element is not even mentioned until chapter nine. This is a misreading: It was the mother of Django's erstwhile impresario, Charles Delaunay, who was Jewish. The near–fairy tale story of Django's own Romany mother, Laurence "Negros" Reinhardt, makes up much of chapter one. MICHAEL DREGNI

YAFFE REPLIES

Syracuse, NY

■ I am sorry to misrepresent Dregni and Reinhardt, but looking at the book now, I can see why I was misled. In the paragraph before the one at issue, there are many references to Delaunay and Reinhardt, so that the antecedent for "his mother was Jewish" was unclear. The sentence previous to the one Dregni refers to reads "Delaunay read Hitler's *Mein Kampf* and feared for the future of all Europe," technically making "Hitler" the antecedent for "his." Of course, I never thought that was what Dregni meant and assumed—incorrectly, it turns out—that he was continuing his discussion of Delaunay's concern about Reinhardt's prospects in Vichy France. I thank Dregni for clearing this up and offer my apologies.

DAVID YAFFE

HE SHOULD TRY LEAVE-ITRA!

Oakdale, Minn.

■ After further review, the diagnosis stands: George W. Bush has Iraqtile dysfunction!

RICHARD WADE

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IN THIS ISSUE

2 **LETTERS**

EDITORIALS & COMMENT

3 ROCKING THE HOUSE

4 ETHICS-GO-ROUND
Ari Berman

5 THE ALITO FAILURE
Bruce Shapiro

6 A IS FOR ANTI-WOMAN
Sharon Lerner

8 COMIX NATION
T(r)apped
R.O. Blechman

28 IN FACT...

COLUMNS

6 DEADLINE POET
Bush Explains "Signing Statement"...
Calvin Trillin

9 DIARY OF A MAD LAW PROFESSOR
Foggy Bottom
Patricia J. Williams

10 THE LIBERAL MEDIA
Never Mind the Truth...
Eric Alterman

ARTICLES

11 AN ALTERNATIVE STATE OF THE UNION
THE RIGHT TO VOTE: *Jesse Jackson Jr.*
A WAR WE CAN WIN: *Jim McDermott*
PATRIOT CORPORATIONS: *Jan Schakowsky*
MEDICARE FOR ALL: *Pete Stark*
A PATRIOTIC CHALLENGE: *Bernie Sanders*
MORE MEDIA OWNERS: *Maurice Hinchey*
EMPLOYEE FREE CHOICE: *George Miller*
INTELLIGENT REFORM: *John Tierney*
MODEL HEALTHCARE: *Bob Filner*
ACCOUNTABLE COMPANIES: *Sheila Jackson Lee*
OUT OF IRAQ: *Lynn Woolsey & Barbara Lee*
A UNIFIED SECURITY BUDGET: *John Conyers*
CLEAN AND GREEN: *Raul Grijalva*
TRADING UP: *Sherrod Brown*
SAVING SMALL FARMERS: *Marcy Kaptur*
EDUCATION MOBILIZATION: *Major Owens*
GOOD GOVERNMENT: *Henry Waxman*
RAISING UP YOUTH: *Diane Watson*
REALISTIC IMMIGRATION: *Hilda Solis*
THE BIG FIX: *Dennis Kucinich*

BOOKS & THE ARTS

29 FISK: The Great War for Civilisation: The Conquest of the Middle East
Augustus Richard Norton

36 BLUM: Reforging the White Republic: Race, Religion and American Nationalism, 1865–1898
ROEDIGER: Working Toward Whiteness: How America's Immigrants Became White—The Strange Journey From Ellis Island to the Suburbs
KATZNELSON: When Affirmative Action Was White: An Untold History of Racial Inequality in Twentieth-Century America
David Oshinsky

40 ART
Fra Angelico
Arthur C. Danto

Cover by Gene Case & Stephen Klingl
Avenging Angels;
illustration by Christoph Niemann

EDITORIALS

Rocking the House

After George W. Bush delivers his fifth State of the Union address, on January 31, the President's partisans will try to persuade Americans that even while his extremist agenda runs aground, there is no alternative. It's a spin that has worked in the past, with too much of the media and too many Americans convinced that a hapless and incoherent Democratic leadership is unprepared to take the country in a new direction.

That spin stops here. In this special issue of *The Nation*, twenty members of the Congressional Progressive Caucus take on the daunting foreign and domestic policy challenges facing the United States in year six of the Bush/Cheney Administration. They offer road maps to renewal that are both principled and pragmatic. In the words of the senior member of the caucus, Representative John Conyers, these House members are expressing "a clear vision for America. Ours is not the Bush agenda of the radical right nor the flaccid flounderings of Democrats. We have a fresh, vigorous alternative, and we're going to present a plan for an activist government dedicated to serving all Americans."

This bright alternative arrives at a critical moment. The fears and uncertainties that warped American politics in the immediate aftermath of 9/11 have given way to frustration, anger and skepticism. A genuine opposition message can finally be heard by an electorate weary of the deliberate deceits, abuses of power, crimes and corruptions that have dominated the headlines for months. Yet the strategists who steer the Democratic leaders in Washington continue to counsel caution. Their misguided timidity makes the views and ideals of the Progressive Caucus—leaders of the democratic wing of the Democratic Party, to paraphrase the late Senator Paul Wellstone—more vital, more necessary, than ever.

The proposals in this issue are not poll-tested compromises. At a time when too many Democrats have lost their way (read: spine), these Progressive Caucus members—from co-chairs Barbara Lee and Lynn Woolsey, to outspoken House veterans like Conyers and Henry Waxman, to rising stars like Jan Schakowsky and Raul Grijalva—have consistently fought against the war and for working Americans. Practical and achievable, the solutions they propose also express deeply held convictions that have carried a number of these Representatives, including Independent Bernie Sanders (a Senate hopeful come November) and Democrats Dennis Kucinich and Marcy Kaptur, to victory over Republican incumbents. They are the principles that have made the sixty-two-member Progressive Caucus the fastest-growing group in a Capitol where ideologically committed factions—from the old Democratic Study Group of the 1960s and '70s to Newt Gingrich's Conservative Opportunity Society—have a record of transforming moribund parties into political powerhouses. The caucus has reorganized in recent months, hiring new staff and making a serious push not only to shift the debate in Congress but to reorient the American discourse on issues ranging from national security to healthcare and tax policy.

The Progressive Caucus is not yet the defining force among Congressional Democrats. But it's the one group that makes the connection between members of Congress and the grassroots

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COMMENT

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activists whose idealism and energy will be essential to progressive victories in next fall's elections. The Institute for Policy Studies, a Washington think tank, has worked with the caucus since its inception in 1990 to help make that connection. The IPS provides members with bold policy approaches to national and international issues and with research showing how skewed federal budget priorities cause economic, political and racial inequities. IPS also takes caucus members to vulnerable communities to see the effects of those inequities firsthand.

This special issue shows that progressives do have a coherent agenda—and that they have bold, workable solutions to the country's most vexing problems. The time for this progressive agenda is ripe: We have a historic opportunity to renew not just the Democratic Party but our national experiment in democracy. These Progressive Caucus members are seizing that opportunity with faith that the American people are ready to take back their democracy, to undo the damage of the Bush-Frist-DeLay years and to set America on a course toward the just and peaceful future that can—and must—replace the dark interregnum through which we now pass.

COMMENT

Ethics-Go-Round

With the worst Congressional scandal in decades unfolding, it's reasonable to assume that nobody's busier on Capitol Hill than the House Ethics Committee. Surprise: For all practical purposes, there is no House Ethics Committee—it's been defunct for the past year. "I've been in Congress nineteen years, and this is the first time I've ever known us to operate without an Ethics Committee in place," says Congresswoman Louise Slaughter, ranking Democrat on the House Rules Committee.

It hasn't always been this way—and for good reason. The responsibility for policing Congress falls on the Ethics Committee's shoulders. If it doesn't enforce the rules, no one else—short of the Justice Department—will. "There should be a higher standard for Congressmen than just avoiding indictment," says Melanie Sloan of Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington (CREW). Though it has never consistently held members to that higher standard, the committee has done important work. In 1989 the Ethics Committee forced the resignation of Democratic Speaker of the House Jim Wright after exposing his crooked book deal with the Teamsters Union. Three years later the committee found that 355 former and current members of Congress had written bad checks, prompting fifty-three to resign. In 1997 the committee slapped Republican Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich with a $300,000 fine for misusing tax-exempt charities' funds and lying to investigators, sealing Gingrich's demise.

But after a perceived excess of frivolous complaints and partisan mudslinging in the wake of the Gingrich investigation, the House voted to circumscribe its ethics rules and prevent outside groups from filing complaints. (Those filings had often

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been crucial; Common Cause filed the complaint that launched the investigation of Wright.) An "ethics truce" persisted for the next seven years, broken only when outgoing freshman Representative Chris Bell had the audacity to file an official complaint against Representative Tom DeLay in June 2004. The Ethics Committee broke its slumber and handed DeLay three "admonishments"—official letters of rebuke that began the former majority leader's ethical and legal free fall.

The House Republican leadership responded by kicking the chairman and two other Republicans off the committee. New chairman Doc Hastings, a loyalist of GOP Speaker Dennis Hastert, then tried to install his chief of staff to lead the committee's investigations. At that point, last April, Democrats stopped attending meetings and effectively shut down the committee. Squabbling over staffing and investigative jurisdiction continued to paralyze the committee throughout 2005. The net effect: Not one Abramoff-implicated Congressman, including Bob Ney (*aka* "Representative #1" in the infamous Abramoff plea), has been investigated by the Ethics Committee.

Whether the Ethics Committee becomes operational in the New Year remains a $64,000 question. Hastings promised an inquiry into DeLay's lavish, lobbyist-funded travel but now says it won't happen. The committee has hired a new nonpartisan counsel to lead future investigations, but three or four investigators still need to be brought on board to get things moving again. Republicans say the problem is insufficient funds, although the committee spent only $265,000 of its $1.3 million budget in 2005. They also complain of depleted personnel, although that problem arose when Hastings fired the committee heads after the DeLay admonishments. Republicans also say the committee's work shouldn't overlap with Justice Department investigations, although that didn't stop Congressional ethics probes in the Keating Five, Koreagate and Abscam scandals.

Meanwhile, Democratic leaders cry out for investigations—but only in their public statements. "The House Ethics Committee must get to work immediately to investigate ethics and corruption cases in the House, including those involving members with ties to Jack Abramoff," House minority leader Nancy Pelosi declared recently, naming DeLay, Ney, John Doolittle and Richard Pombo as deserving of inquiry. Yet according to Bell, Sloan and lawmakers who asked not to be named, Pelosi has specifically told House members not to file complaints. Pelosi, who said through a spokesperson that she has never been a party to any ethics truce, spent six years on the Ethics Committee during the turbulent Gingrich era ("serving my time," she jokingly calls it). Bell suspects that she's worried about retaliatory complaints being filed against Democrats. "There are some members who want to act, and when they bring it up with the leadership they're told to wait a while," says Bell. Congress, he says, "is a self-preservation institution. Members realize that if they rock the boat they endanger their self-preservation. And you can't file an ethics complaint without rocking the boat."

Bell knows. After taking action against DeLay, he says he was shunned for months by his party leadership and prevented by Ney, who chairs the powerful House Administration Committee and controls the mail, from circulating a letter explaining his actions. Bell was also rebuked by the Ethics Committee for improperly filing his complaint. "It had a chilling effect," he says.

In that kind of climate, it's more convenient for Democrats to complain about ethics scandals than to actually do anything about them. One lawmaker, Pete Stark of California, placed a $500 ad on NationalJournal.com in June against disgraced Representative Randy "Duke" Cunningham. But Stark didn't file an ethics complaint. Stark says that he was "informally advised by colleagues that this wouldn't be a good idea" and was assured that the Ethics Committee would "get to Cunningham in its own time," so "throwing rocks wouldn't do any good." Of course, Stark notes, "the committee didn't get to him, the prosecutors did."

The composition of the Ethics Committee, split equally between parties, allows the Democrats power that they enjoy on no other committee in a Republican-controlled Congress. As Congressional abuses in the Abramoff investigation become impossible to ignore, will they once again take advantage of that power? Asked whether Democrats would start filing ethics complaints again, Pelosi spokeswoman Jennifer Crider was less than emphatic: "We're getting to the point where you may see Democrats that do that," Crider said.

"There is a culture of corruption," says CREW's Sloan, mimicking the familiar refrain of Pelosi and other Democratic leaders. "I just wish the Democrats would do more than talk about it." That would mean ending the ethics truce, filing new complaints, insisting that outside groups be allowed to file complaints and pushing for an independent ethics commission of outside experts or former members of Congress to end the charade of the House policing itself. It's true that a full-on Democratic effort to revive House ethics investigations carries the risk of partisan retaliation. But Democrats should forget about Congressional tit-for-tat. Even the *Wall Street Journal* editorial page has called on the House Ethics Committee to sanction the likes of Bob Ney. If this is not the time for both parties to get serious about Congressional ethics, when will it be?

ARI BERMAN

Ari Berman is a Puffin Foundation writing fellow at The Nation Institute.

The Alito Failure

The Samuel Alito hearings demonstrate the price of one-party government. A Supreme Court nominee who is by expressed conviction opposed to *Roe v. Wade* and dodgy about privacy rights, whose radical jurisprudence undercuts Congressional authority and guts civil rights enforcement—a philosophy not long ago viewed as unconfirmable—now appears to be hurtling toward confirmation amid cheers from the right and resigned shrugs from too many Democrats.

Confirmation hearings are supposed to inform the Senate and the public about a nominee—to put some meat on the bare bones of the Constitution's advise-and-consent clause. Alito's hearings did the opposite, obscuring his fifteen-year paper trail as a judge and his careerlong commitments. The Democratic failure to make Alito's far-right biography stick may invite Monday-

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morning quarterbacking, but it is also clear that no matter what Alito said, he would have retained the support of most of the Judiciary Committee Republicans—including, unfortunately, Arlen Specter, who traded in his record as a prochoice moderate to preserve his prerogatives as Judiciary chairman.

The real Democratic failure is long-term. For years Democratic leaders have avoided the work of strengthening a constituency for civil rights and civil liberties, keeping such issues at the periphery of their political strategy. In that sense, Alito's expected confirmation is payback. It's fine to say that a more balanced Supreme Court is impossible without Democratic victories in 2006 and '08, but such victories will gain little if they are not accompanied by a renewed Democratic commitment to privacy, equality and civil liberties as core values—and by Democratic politicians' determination to tell a persuasive story about why people should care.

There are still reasons to slow this nomination down and fight Alito as hard as possible. For one thing, Democrats have never gained by folding their cards on a judicial nominee; the tactical decision by some to vote for John Roberts, thinking that would lend credibility to opposing an even more conservative nominee like Alito, earned them chump change rather than political capital. (Roberts's vote against Oregon's Death With Dignity Act should end the fiction that he is a social pragmatist in the O'Connor mold. If Alito is confirmed, there will be a solid four-vote bloc of social conservatives.) Even more compelling—enough to warrant a filibuster—is the gathering constitutional crisis over presidential power and accountability. Given Alito's long devotion to expansive executive-branch power, his post-9/11 endorsement of the unitary-executive theory and his cagey responses to senators' questions about presidential lawbreaking in wartime, his nomination deepens that constitutional crisis—an extreme circumstance without historical parallel.

BRUCE SHAPIRO

Bruce Shapiro was director of The Nation Institute's Supreme Court Watch during the nominations of Justices Thomas, Breyer and Ginsburg.

CALVIN TRILLIN

GEORGE W. BUSH EXPLAINS THE 'SIGNING STATEMENT' ISSUED WHEN HE SIGNED JOHN MCCAIN'S ANTI-TORTURE AMENDMENT INTO LAW

Since I'm the one in charge in war,
I'll do what I have done before
If it's consistent with my duties.
Is that an out? You bet your booties.
The boss is boss; he can't be bossed.
I signed, but with my fingers crossed.

We do not torture, never will.
So why did we oppose John's bill?
Don't ask, unless you'd like this plan:
Rendition to Uzbekistan.
McCain won't win. We haven't lost.
I signed, but with my fingers crossed.

A Is for Anti-Woman

If you suffered through the stultifying, weeklong confirmation hearings, you probably think you know all you can—or ever wanted to—about Samuel Alito. But there's much about the judge's views on issues affecting women that was buried under legal obfuscation and senatorial small talk, starting with his purposely confusing statements on *Roe v. Wade*. When Senator Dick Durbin asked Alito whether the case that established the constitutional right to abortion in 1973 was the settled law of the land, the judge equivocated. He might have simply taken the path Roberts did in his confirmation hearings, answering with a completely unenforceable "yes." (Clarence Thomas made a similar statement during his confirmation hearings and then went on to vote to overturn *Roe*.) Instead, tellingly, Alito said he thought the decision could be re-examined.

This should come as no surprise. We already knew from the famous 1985 memo that was part of his application for a job in the Reagan Administration that Alito felt the Constitution didn't protect the right to abortion and that he was "particularly proud" of his work making that point (this on top of the emphatic statement from his 90-year-old mother, Rose, that "of course he's against abortion"). Yet Alito didn't attempt to distance himself from his reputation as an abortion opponent, and in fact stood by his record on the issue. Indeed, the judge said, "I'd be the same sort of Justice on the Supreme Court that I've been a judge on the Court of Appeals." So we know we can look to *Casey v. Planned Parenthood*, for instance, the much-discussed case he ruled on in 1991, to see what's ahead. That's the decision in which he not only upheld a law requiring doctors to inform women of the potential "medical dangers" of abortion but dissented from the majority by saying that married women should have to notify their husbands before being allowed one.

Alito's less-publicized writings on reproductive issues may be even more revealing. In 1985 he outlined the road map for how to dismantle a woman's right to an abortion piece by piece even if *Roe* stands, a blueprint that the antichoice movement has followed to dramatic effect. And in the same memo Alito recommended a law that would require doctors to inform "a woman that certain methods of birth control are abortifacients." This line of thinking has become one of the hottest

(Continued on Page 27)

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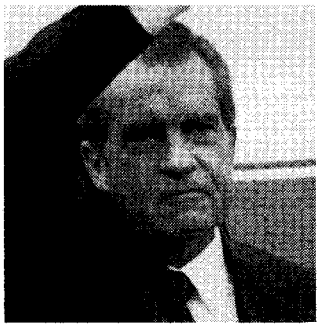
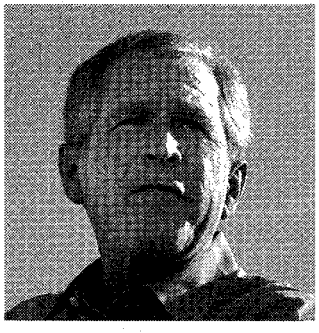


He lied to the American people and broke the law.

"On May 22, I stated in very specific terms and I state again to every one of you listening tonight these facts — I had no prior knowledge of the Watergate break-in; I neither took part in nor knew about any of the subsequent coverup activities; I neither authorized nor encouraged subordinates to engage in illegal or improper campaign tactics. That was and that is the simple truth." —Richard M. Nixon, August 15, 1973



So did he.

"Now, by the way, any time you hear the United States government talking about wiretap, it requires — a wiretap requires a court order. Nothing has changed, by the way. When we're talking about chasing down terrorists, we're talking about getting a court order before we do so. It's important for our fellow citizens to understand, when you think Patriot Act, constitutional guarantees are in place when it comes to doing what is necessary to protect our homeland, because we value the Constitution." —George W. Bush, April 20, 2004

What should we do when the U.S. President lies to us and breaks the law?

Call the White House at (202) 456-1414 and tell the administration to stop spying illegally on Americans.

Join the ACLU today.

To learn more, go to www.aclu.org

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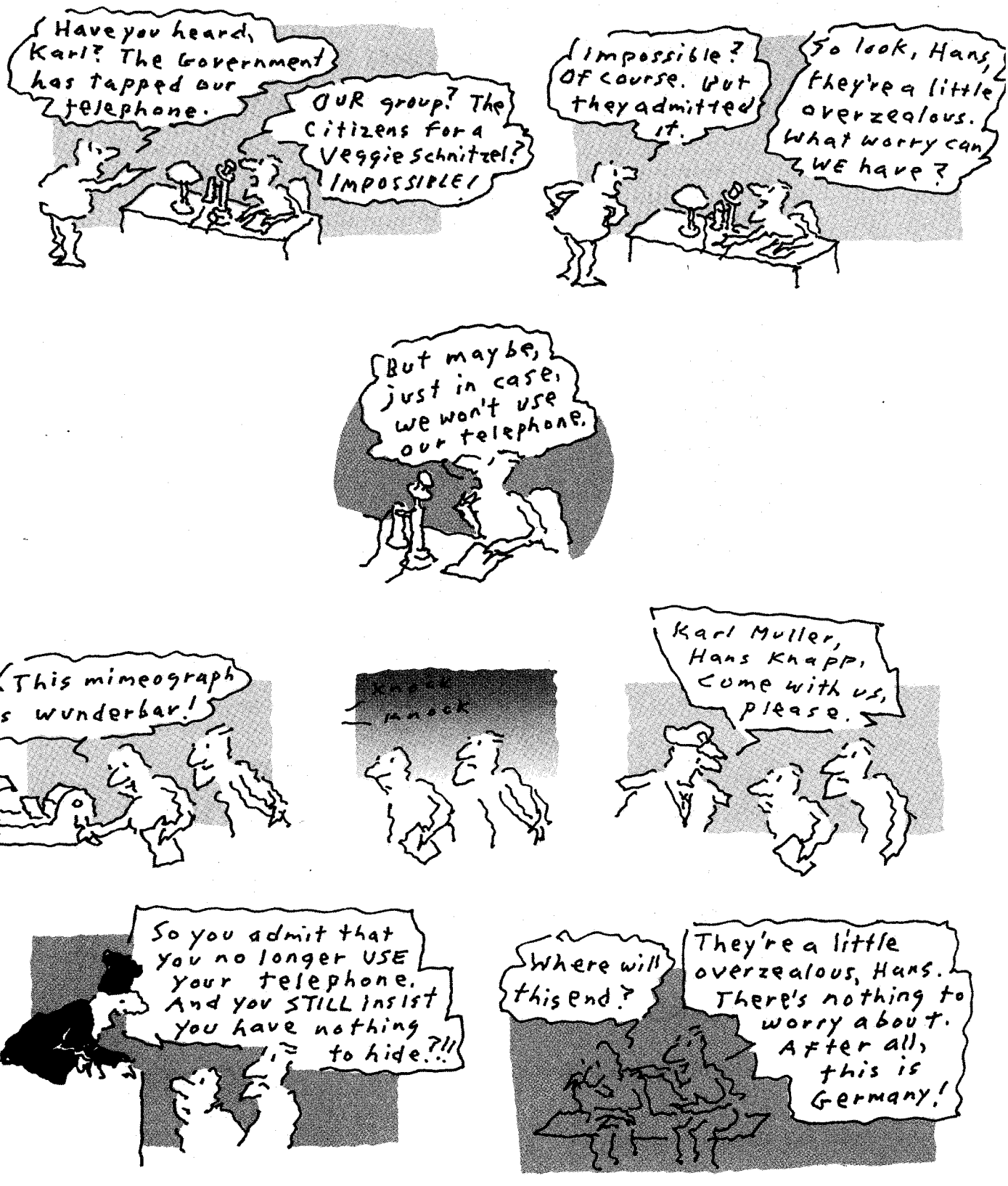
COMIX NATION

T(R)APPED

R.O. BLECHMAN


Have you heard, Karl? The Government has tapped our telephone.
OUR group? The Citizens for a Veggie Schnitzel? IMPOSSIBLE!
Impossible? Of course. But they admitted it.
So look, Hans, they're a little overzealous. What worry can WE have?
But maybe, just in case, we won't use our telephone.
This mimeograph is wunderbar!
knock knock
Karl Muller, Hans Knapp, Come with us, please.
So you admit that you no longer USE your telephone. And you STILL insist you have nothing to hide?!!
Where will this end?
They're a little overzealous, Hans. There's nothing to worry about. After all, this is Germany!

R.O. Blechman

R.O. Blechman has recently completed a children's book about a housefly.

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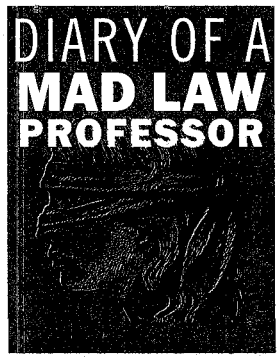
PATRICIA J. WILLIAMS

Foggy Bottom



Since it has come to light that George W. Bush, through the National Security Agency, has been snooping on telephone and Internet communications without benefit of warrant or oversight of any kind, there have been quite a few worried, if tentative, complaints that we are edging toward a monarchy. "King George..." is how the conversation usually begins.

While the President could indeed be said to have arrogated unto himself some pretty monarchical powers, I think the comparison does not convey the immensity of the constitutional crisis posed by his intentional bypassing of judicial oversight. Frankly, I don't think comparisons to royalty serve us very well in an era when kings act more like socialites, their crowns slightly askew, disco-ing till dawn. The graver modern risk comes not from kings but from dictators. Those who dictate. Those who rule by their word alone, whose word *is* law, superseding all other inquiry.

The debate is playing out in the media fuzzily, haltingly, perhaps because of the conflation of two questions. One is whether the executive can eavesdrop on citizens at all. It can. The other is whether exercise of that power rests entirely upon the say-so of the President or his agents. It does not. Yet breathless radio and TV debates pit those two issues against each other. "He has the power to protect us by listening in!" versus "He has no power to invade our privacy!" The issue is better stated by interconnecting the two premises: He has the power to listen in *when* he has gotten permission by presenting reasons to do so that are within a warrantable range of relevance to law-enforcement goals.

The law is hardly burdensome, as should be well understood by now. The President must go to a special court set up for the purpose of vetting the underlying reasons or suspicions necessitating such intrusion. That court is secret, in deference to matters of national security. If time is of the essence, a warrant may be obtained from the court after the fact. The President may also seek the approval or waiver of members of Congress. These requirements are simple but not at all equivocal: The President must get permission to wiretap, period. It is not a deep or mysterious point of law. If there is law, then this is it. If there is due process, then this is the procedure that is due.

If, on the other hand, we are suspending the law in deference to Mr. Bush's unchecked impulses, then we should call it by its proper name. Benign lawlessness? Gitmo Governance? Fear Factor?

The public discussion I listen to seems to be something on the order of: "The President is a man of action, he doesn't have time." Or: "We're at war! Don't tie his hands!" But if all aspects of the executive function are reduced to "Do what's necessary and just don't tell us"—whether eavesdropping, detaining without trial or even torture and execution—we have a general rather than a President, a secret-police state rather than either a republic or a democracy.

Some discussions have treated the matter as though it's about "an expansion of executive power," as though we were wondering whether to put a little more air in the tires, more gas in the balloon. But skirting the power of the judiciary or ignoring the laws of Congress is not within or about the power of the executive. Rather, it is a diminishment of the other branches of government. It doesn't matter whether Bush is a kind man or a polite man or a handsome man or whether he sings quite charmingly in church. If the President doesn't have to obey the rules because he thinks the liberal order is outdated and naïve, then this is a huge shift in our core values. It is, as Al Gore put it, a "threat to the very structure of our government." It's the transformation of a tripartite system into a solo act. We can call it all kinds of other things, like a "unitary executive," but institutionally it's no different from authoritarianism.

The AOL News that pops up on my computer screen reads: GORE SLAMS WARRANTLESS SPYING... DO YOU AGREE WITH EX-VEEP? There is a picture of Gore with his hand raised as though in mid-slam. The caption reads: "He Says Bush Broke the Law..." The article is not exactly a lesson in civics; it reads more like a reality show, just one big "He says, she says"—to be determined, like some contest, by whether the denizens of cyberspace push the button marked "agree" or "disagree."

Republican commentators have rushed to dismiss any concern by recasting the problem as one of Democrat ego rather than basic ideology. "Al Gore's incessant need to insert himself in the headline of the day," sniffed Tracey Schmitt, spokeswoman for the Republican National Committee, "is almost as glaring as his lack of understanding of the threats facing America. While the President works to protect Americans from terrorists, Democrats deliver no solutions of their own, only diatribes laden with inaccuracies and anger."

And so it goes, the invocation of Bush as strong-jawed action figure, "facing" great threat, grappling with danger on the ground rather than fussing with duty's prissier details. Democrats are depicted as having turned their backs on victory, throwing petty distractions in the way of executive resolve and tantrums in a misplaced scramble for "headlines." Shush, children, he's too busy to play with the courts right now, runs this subtext; too busy to get a "permission slip" to do his job. We the little people must trust him if we truly love our country. And woe betide those who disobey and insist that he follow the clear mandate of his legal responsibility. Those troublemakers are, in Bush's estimation, lending "aid and comfort" to the enemy—a phrase, not coincidentally, matching the constitutional definition of treason. Distrust of and dissent from the President is treason, in other words; yet the President's disregard of the constraints of his office is not?

This should not be a debate resolved by Bush's likability quotient or Gore's agreeability score. The implications of this go well beyond Father Knows Best and stretch all the way to Dear Inerrant Leader. ■

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ERIC ALTERMAN

Never Mind the Truth...

The Alito hearings may not have revealed much about the new Supreme Court Associate Justice's constitutional views, but they did highlight the pro-Bush bias that continues to characterize most mainstream debate. CNN's Wolf Blitzer, as reliable a weather vane for conventional wisdom as can be found anywhere, continually skewed his coverage to reflect the Republican Party's talking points, announcing, "Some Democrats are delivering an early verdict on Alito's performance" without asking whether Republicans were doing the same. Blitzer also complained, "Are [Democrats] looking for answers, or for the Supreme Court nominee to stumble?" and inquired of Ted Kennedy whether he had already made up his mind without posing a similar question during his interview to Bill Frist, or noting the Republicans on the Judiciary Committee who had already declared themselves in Alito's favor.

Blitzer's coverage proved to be the norm. PBS's Gwen Ifill, giving no evidence, complained of "all of the demonization of this candidate" by liberal interest groups. MSNBC's coverage was dominated by pro-Alito guests, including nights of prime-time programming that allowed not a single dissenter.

The punditocracy's ignore-except-to-attack attitude toward liberals is a far greater impediment to our ability to mount an alternative to the ruinous rule of George W. Bush than the attitudes of Americans themselves, who in poll after poll disagree with the President on almost all significant issues. *Washington Post* columnist Sebastian Mallaby gleefully announces that "attacking Bushonomics"—the policies of the party that controls the government and has abandoned even the pretense of fiscal responsibility—"is too easy, like shooting a lame duck." He prefers "to focus instead on Democrats' response."

Liberal war opponents were clearly correct about the self-defeating stupidity of Bush's Iraq misadventure, but pundits treat their foresight as a kind of disqualifying handicap. Mallaby's colleague Richard Cohen lauded Joe Biden because he "voted to authorize the president to go to war but has since characterized that vote as 'a mistake,'" which, Cohen notes, "approximately reflects my own position." Woe unto those who were right in the first place. Among media war boosters, George Packer cannot find room in the 467 pages of his celebrated war history, *The Assassins' Gate*, for the words "I was wrong." Those who recognized the Bush Administration's lethal combination of dishonesty, ideology and incompetence—in plain view at the time—are dismissed by Packer as possessing "second-rate minds."

Among the most egregious offenders against journalistic standards and simple honesty for the purpose of abusing liberals is *Time*'s Joe Klein, who is, amazingly, the most liberal commentator currently employed by America's highest-circulation newsweekly. (Klein's animus toward liberals coupled with his cavalier treatment of inconvenient facts could hardly be in greater contrast to that of *Newsweek*'s high-profile liberal columnist Jonathan Alter, whose solid reporting and tempered idealism serves as a kind of remnant and reminder of the long-defunct liberal Establishment.)

To take just one recent example, a Klein column posted January 8 accused Democrats of "playing too fast and too loose with issues of war and peace." Now look who's talking:

Klein writes, "The latest version of the absolutely necessary Patriot Act, which updates the laws regulating the war on terrorism and contains civil-liberties improvements over the first edition, was nearly killed by a stampede of Senate Democrats." In fact, this "stampede" was led by four Republicans.

Klein writes, "A strong majority would favor the NSA program...if its details were declassified and made known." In fact, when an Associated Press poll asked Americans if the Bush Administration should be required to get a warrant before wiretapping, 56 percent answered affirmatively.

Klein writes, "Until the Democrats make clear that they will err on the side of aggressiveness in the war against al-Qaeda, they will probably not regain the majority in Congress or the country." This statement ignores that the Bush Administration diverted resources from capturing bin Laden and destroying Al Qaeda to send them to Iraq, where no such threat existed but where one has since been created. It also ignores the fact that Republicans received a minority of the Congressional vote in 2004, as well as in the presidential votes of 2000, 1996 and 1992.

Klein writes that since the publication of the *New York Times* story on domestic spying, "the terrorists have modified their behavior, hampering our efforts to keep track of them." His evidence? "U.S. intelligence officials" told him. Now, *that's* convincing. The *Times* reported that virtually without exception, the wiretaps "led to dead ends or innocent Americans." (Perhaps the gullible Mr. Klein might be interested in buying some hot African yellowcake uranium, special price...)

Klein concludes, "For too many liberals, all secret intelligence activities are 'fruit,' and bitter fruit at that. The government is presumed guilty of illegal electronic eavesdropping until proven innocent. This sort of civil-liberties fetishism is a hangover from the Vietnam era." But what Klein mocks as fetishism and a Vietnam hangover is the law of the land, according to fourteen scholars of constitutional law and former government officials who wrote to Congress that "the program appears on its face to violate existing law." The nonpartisan Congressional Research Service also reported that it is "unlikely that a court would hold that Congress has expressly or impliedly authorized the NSA electronic surveillance operations," and added that the Bush/Klein argument "does not seem to be...well-grounded."

So here, apparently, is the punditocracy argument in a nutshell: Never mind that liberals are constitutionally correct. Never mind that their view is supported by a majority of Americans. And never mind that the Bush Administration has repeatedly lied to the American people on exactly these issues. Never mind, most of all, the truth. ■

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AN AMERICA RESTORED

AN ALTERNATIVE STATE OF THE UNION

THE RIGHT TO VOTE
Jesse Jackson Jr.

"The vote" is a human right. It is seen as an American right. In a democracy there is nothing more fundamental than having the right to vote.

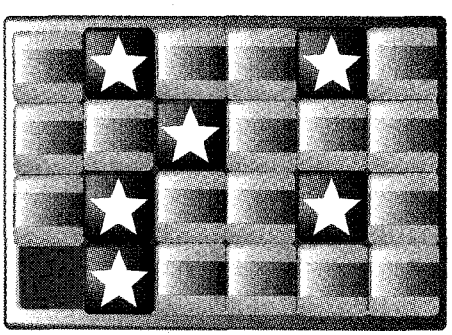
And yet the right to vote is *not* a fundamental right in our Constitution. Some liberals argue that the fundamental right to vote for every American citizen is implied in the Constitution, based on Supreme Court precedent. Yet when I ask them about the denial of voting representation in Congress to District of Columbia citizens, or about the denial of ex-felons' voting rights in most states, many liberals concede that the current structure of our Constitution limits the ability of the courts and Congress to adequately address important voting-rights issues.

It is amazing to me that many Democrats failed to grasp the most fundamental finding in *Bush v. Gore*: "The individual citizen has no federal constitutional right to vote for electors for the President of the United States."

Our voting system's foundation is built on the sand of states' rights and local control. We have fifty states, 3,141 counties and 7,800 different local election jurisdictions. All separate and unequal.

In four states, if you're an ex-felon you're barred from voting for life. There are 5 million Americans (including 1.8 million African-Americans, mostly in Southern states—where 55 percent of African-Americans live) who have paid their debt to society but are prohibited from voting. At the same time, in Maine and Vermont you can vote even if you're in jail.

We need to build our voting system on a rock—the rock of adding a Voting Rights Amendment to the US Constitution. The amendment I have proposed in each of the last several Congresses (HJR 28) would provide the American people with a citizenship right to vote. It would also give Congress the authority to craft a unitary voting system for federal, state and local elections—one that guarantees all votes will be counted in a complete, fair, free and efficient manner.



Democrats have been made so defensive by right-wing Republicans' constant stream of absurd amendments—anti-gay, antichoice, anti–flag "desecration"—that we've developed a negative rationale and posture about the Constitution: It's fine just the way it is. But fights over "rights" and constitutional amendments are where elections are being won and lost. And when Democrats don't fight for common laws, defending human rights, we're just reaffirming states' rights and local control, both of which are inherently separate and unequal.

Building a more perfect union by turning human rights into American rights—that's what Democrats should be fighting for. Let's wage this fight one issue at a time, rolling out a sort of second Bill of Rights. After the Voting Rights Amendment, we might add public education and equal-quality healthcare to every American's citizenship rights. An equal rights for women amendment. An affordable-housing amendment. A clean, safe and sustainable environment amendment. A fair taxes amendment. A full-employment amendment. An amendment for direct election of the American President and Vice President.

Fighting for human and constitutional rights is a theme, and a strategy, that could keep Democrats together for the next fifty years, election after election. It's time to begin a lofty fight to add the right to vote to the Constitution—and paint a truer picture of most Republicans as undemocratic. It's time to stand up and insure every American's right to vote to have that vote fully protected and to have it fairly counted.

Jesse Jackson Jr., member of the House Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, has represented Illinois's 2nd District since 1995.

A WAR WE CAN WIN
Jim McDermott

As a State Department doctor in Africa in the mid-1980s, I saw diseases like AIDS take root. Before long, it became clear to me that African countries, like other developing nations, faced two possible futures: heartbreak or hope. In one future, disease would condemn struggling nations to a cruel fate of crushing poverty, a crumbling workforce and catastrophic death. In the other, the United States

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and other nations would fight a common enemy, uniting every nation and every culture against health scourges everywhere.

The war against disease is a war we can win.

The humanitarian implications are profound, but so are the economic ones. We can spend years arguing over which tax or trade policies will best help poor countries economically, but fighting diseases that kill millions and cripple countries' workforces will help most of all.

Avian flu is a new threat, but AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria are not; they take more than 6 million lives annually. Fortunately, we already have the tools to fight global disease. We know, for example, that five simple interventions (among them vaccines, antibiotics and Vitamin A) can significantly increase child survival at minimal cost. We know that more expensive interventions to provide AIDS treatment and education have shown promising results in Uganda, Botswana, Mozambique and elsewhere. We know that the major diseases exacerbate one another—and that if we can keep you from getting AIDS, you're less likely to die of malaria, and if we can cure your TB, you're less likely to die from AIDS. And we know that the key is providing enough doctors and nurses, effective and affordable medications and preventive care worldwide.

Basic policy changes will help us win this war. First, we need more resources. President Bush made headlines in 2003 when he promised $15 billion over five years to fight HIV, TB and malaria. It's a start, but billions more are needed. Meanwhile, we can spend our money better. Current law sets aside a third of all AIDS-prevention spending for abstinence education, which is less effective than other prevention tools. If we increase our contributions to international groups like the Global Fund, which has programs in 128 countries worldwide, we can leverage the resources and good will of other developed nations.

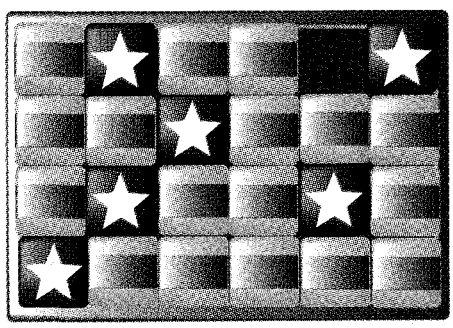
We have to broaden our targets and methods, too. Most AIDS-fighting funds provided through our current program go to just fifteen countries and address only about half of all AIDS cases worldwide. We need to reach the rest. And in this war, we can't ignore disease-fighting "treatments" that doctors cannot deliver: clean water, nutrition, improved access to education and rights for young women. These are as essential as medicine.

In the three minutes it has taken to read this article, fifteen people have died from AIDS, tuberculosis or malaria. The world cannot afford to wait another three minutes to act.

Jim McDermott, chair of the Congressional Task Force on International HIV/AIDS, has represented Washington's 7th District since 1989.

PATRIOT CORPORATIONS
Jan Schakowsky

If you want to make Americans of all stripes mad, tell them about the billions of dollars in subsidies and tax breaks our government gives to companies that outsource jobs, exploit workers (both here and overseas) and dodge taxes. Tell them about Accenture, for example, which advises other companies how to outsource jobs overseas while avoiding its fair share of tax payments by incorporating offshore in Bermuda. Yet like many other US corporations, Accenture continues to qualify for tax breaks, and it currently has more than $500 million in government contracts—courtesy of taxpayers.



Meanwhile, urban communities and small towns are devastated by plant closings. Often these plants are owned by profitable corporations like Maytag, which moved its Galesburg, Illinois, plant to Reynosa, Mexico, in 2004, leaving 1,600 workers without their good-paying jobs. The number of manufacturing jobs in the United States has fallen all the way back to the level it was in 1945. And our government continues to provide carrots—and no sticks—to companies harming our economy.

To end this race to the bottom, we must stop rewarding outsourcers and tax dodgers, and start rewarding companies that care about America and American workers.

A sensible proposal to create "Patriot Corporations" was developed by Bill Edley, a former State Representative in Illinois, and political scientist Robin Johnson of Monmouth College. Funded by rolling back all of President Bush's tax cuts and recouping taxes lost through corporate offshore loopholes, the Patriot Corporations program would be entirely revenue-neutral and voluntary. It would give significant tax advantages and shareholder incentives to corporations that agree to create a real partnership with American workers. Patriot Corporations would also move to the front of the line for federal contracts—no small incentive.

To qualify, corporations would have to produce at least 90 percent of their US-sold goods and services in the United States. They would also have to:

§ limit top management salaries to 100 times the lowest-paid full-time worker;

§ spend at least 50 percent of their research and development budgets in the United States;

§ operate a profit-sharing plan for all employees, contribute at least 5 percent of payroll to a portable pension fund and pay at least 70 percent of the cost of a standardized and portable health insurance plan;

§ agree to neutrality in employee organizing drives;

§ be in good standing with EPA, OSHA and NLRB regulations;

§ and agree not to price-gouge consumers.

Companies that meet those standards are the ones that deserve carrots. With Patriot Corporations we can create a new class of companies as committed to American workers as they are to selling goods in the American market. And we can create a new patriotic ethic in America—one that unites workers and their employers in the mutual goal of building a stronger, more prosperous, more democratic business sector that can vigorously and proudly compete in the twenty-first-century global economy.

Jan Schakowsky, ranking Democrat on the House Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Commerce, Trade and Consumer Protection, has represented Illinois's 9th District since 1999.

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Original sketches found at the Smithsonian

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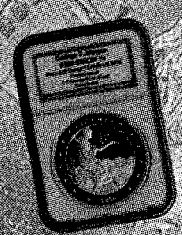

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MEDICARE FOR ALL
Pete Stark

It's no secret that the healthcare system is sick. To maximize profits and shareholder confidence, insurance companies, healthcare providers and drug companies have manipulated the system beyond comprehension. As healthcare costs rise at double-digit rates, fewer and fewer manufacturers and small businesses can offer comprehensive coverage to their employees. General Motors recently admitted it spends more on healthcare than on steel; Starbucks spends more on health insurance than on coffee. And those problems do not even begin to speak to the needs of the uninsured—all 46 million of them, including 9 million children.

Thankfully, the cure is not nearly as complicated as the disease. There is a road map laid out for us: a program that already delivers universal healthcare to nearly 42 million Americans. And it is simple: Workers pay into the system while they're young, and when they turn 65 the government pays their health insurance.

The program, of course, is Medicare. Medicare has lower administrative costs than any private plan on the market. It enjoys one of the highest approval ratings of any government program. But the most important reason Medicare is the best model for an expansion of healthcare benefits is that the program focuses on patients, not profits.

Healthcare gets complicated when it's built around profits rather than care. With patient-first simplicity in mind, I have introduced two proposals to deliver quality, affordable healthcare to every American. First is MediKids, a plan to provide universal coverage to children from birth to age 23. Children would be automatically enrolled at birth, with parents having the choice to opt out of the program by enrolling their children in private plans or in other government programs. But if a lapse in other insurance coverage were to occur, MediKids would automatically pick up the child's health insurance. Simple.

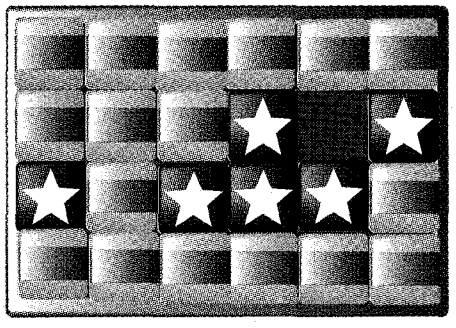
So is the Medicare Early Access Act. This measure would allow people to buy into Medicare once they turn 55—providing essential help to the 4 million uninsured Americans over age 54 who are not currently eligible. To make their premiums affordable, enrollees would receive a tax credit to cover 75 percent of the cost.

These proposals are only a beginning. With Medicare as a model, we can fill the growing gaps in health coverage and ultimately weave together a stable, comprehensive, affordable system for Americans of all ages. Medicare has shown us the power of simplicity; we need only expand its promise to the rest of our population.

Pete Stark, ranking Democrat on the House Ways and Means Health Subcommittee, has represented California's 13th District since 1973.

A PATRIOTIC CHALLENGE
Bernie Sanders

Despite all the rhetoric from President Bush about his great belief in "freedom," his Administration is doing more than any in recent history to undermine our basic constitutional rights. The recent revelation that the President has overseen a secret domestic spying program is only the latest example of the Administration's willingness to disregard our core democratic principles. It is exactly the kind of abuse that we must rein in by reforming the USA Patriot Act.



Written at a time when our nation was reeling from the horrific attacks of September 11, the Patriot Act received little scrutiny and even less opposition when it initially passed. Only one senator and sixty-six House members (myself included) voted against it. But four years later a broad spectrum of Americans has rightly concluded that many provisions of this law endanger the core freedoms that define us as Americans.

The desire for change was demonstrated this past June when the House approved my amendment to revise one of the most controversial sections of the Patriot Act—Section 215, often called the library provision. The amendment prevented the government from gaining access to Americans' reading records in libraries and bookstores without a traditional search warrant. Put forward as part of a spending bill, the amendment was intended to prevent these searches for one year. More important, the vote demonstrated the need for real reform during the act's reauthorization, which was scheduled to come up just a few weeks later.

Faced with overwhelming support for reform, the Republican leadership used every procedural tool at their disposal to prevent the House from voting on amendments that reformed the act—including the same Section 215 amendment that had recently passed. We were left with a reauthorization bill that made very few meaningful changes. Despite this abuse of power, the Republican leadership couldn't silence the coalition of progressives and conservatives in Congress committed to protecting civil liberties. In December these members refused to pass the Republican leadership's bill in the Senate.

When Congress reconvenes, our coalition will fight for a new reauthorization bill that includes essential reforms. Among them is a revision to Section 215 that would require the FBI to show evidence linking a citizen to terrorism before obtaining his or her reading records. We will also push to have this standard applied to national security letters, another Patriot Act mechanism for obtaining citizens' library, bookstore, medical and business records.

Regardless of the outcome in Congress, the fight to restore Americans' core freedoms will continue across the country. In Connecticut librarians have gone to court to challenge a gag order preventing them from discussing the government's use of national security letters to dig up the library records of their patrons. The Electronic Privacy Information Center recently won a lawsuit that forced the FBI to disclose records of clandestine domestic surveillance.

It is critical that these challenges to the unconstitutional provisions of the Patriot Act continue. It's up to us to make sure that the freedoms on which our nation was founded are not subject to the whim of an Administration whose term has been defined by repeated abuses of power.

Bernie Sanders, an Independent on the House Committee on Government Reform, has been Vermont's Representative-at-large since 1991.

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MORE MEDIA OWNERS

Maurice Hinchey

While every topic addressed in this special *Nation* issue is vital to America's future, one issue binds them all together: media ownership reform. Whether it's the war in Iraq or the latest Supreme Court decision, how and where Americans receive their news is critically important. But deregulation has paved the way for a few media companies to dominate the country's information distribution system. Congress must step in to reverse the trend toward media consolidation.

Changes in media ownership have been swift and staggering. Over the past two decades the number of major US media companies fell by more than one half; most of the survivors are controlled by fewer than ten huge media conglomerates. As media outlets continue to be gobbled up by these giants, the marketplace of ideas shrinks. New and independent voices are stifled. And the companies that remain are under little obligation to provide reliable, quality journalism. Stories that matter deeply to the country's well-being have been replaced by sensationalized murders and celebrity gossip.

How did we get here? During the Reagan Administration the Federal Communications Commission made abrupt changes to loosen media regulations. Since then our government has favored benefits to big media over the interests of the people. One of the most blatant examples came in 2003, when then–FCC chairman Michael Powell attempted to implement new rules to allow a corporation to own—in a single local market—up to three TV stations and eight radio stations, along with the area's cable TV system, numerous cable channels and its major (or only) daily newspaper. A federal court temporarily blocked those new rules, but the door remains dangerously open for similar changes to be made under Powell's successor, Kevin Martin. And with President Bush appointing right-wing judges, courts could easily swing in favor of the conglomerates, eliminating a last opportunity for recourse.

That makes Congressional action imperative. Last year I founded the nonpartisan Future of American Media Caucus, which holds briefings designed to give members of Congress new perspectives on pressing media issues. I've also introduced the Media Ownership Reform Act (HR 3302). MORA would restore the Fairness Doctrine—a provision, overturned by the FCC in 1987, that required broadcasters to offer alternative points of view on controversial issues. MORA would reinstate a national cap on radio- and TV-station ownership. It would also lower the number of outlets one company can own in a local market and require more independent programming. In addition to restoring some of the key regulations that have been axed since the 1980s, the bill would insure that broadcasters meet the needs of local communities and would mandate public outreach and public input into programming decisions.

It will not be easy to reverse our recent history of media consolidation. But unless we do, another dangerous trend will continue: the dumbing down of America.

Maurice Hinchey, member of the House Appropriations Committee, has represented the 22nd District of New York since 1993.

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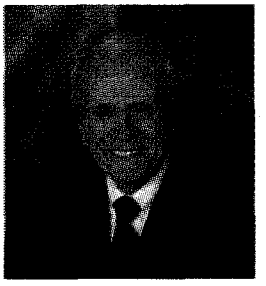

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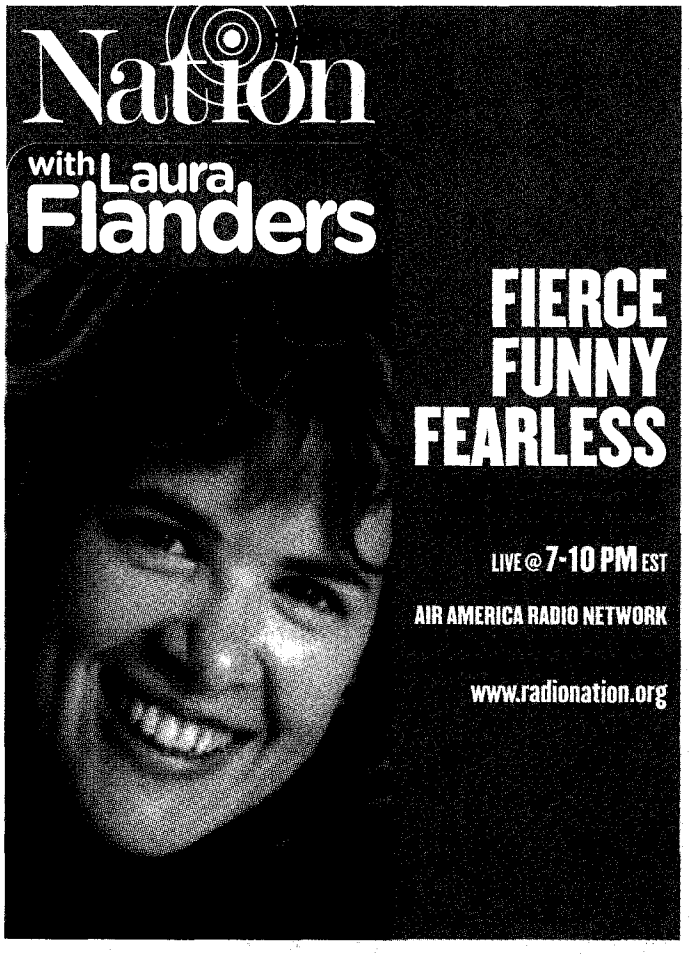

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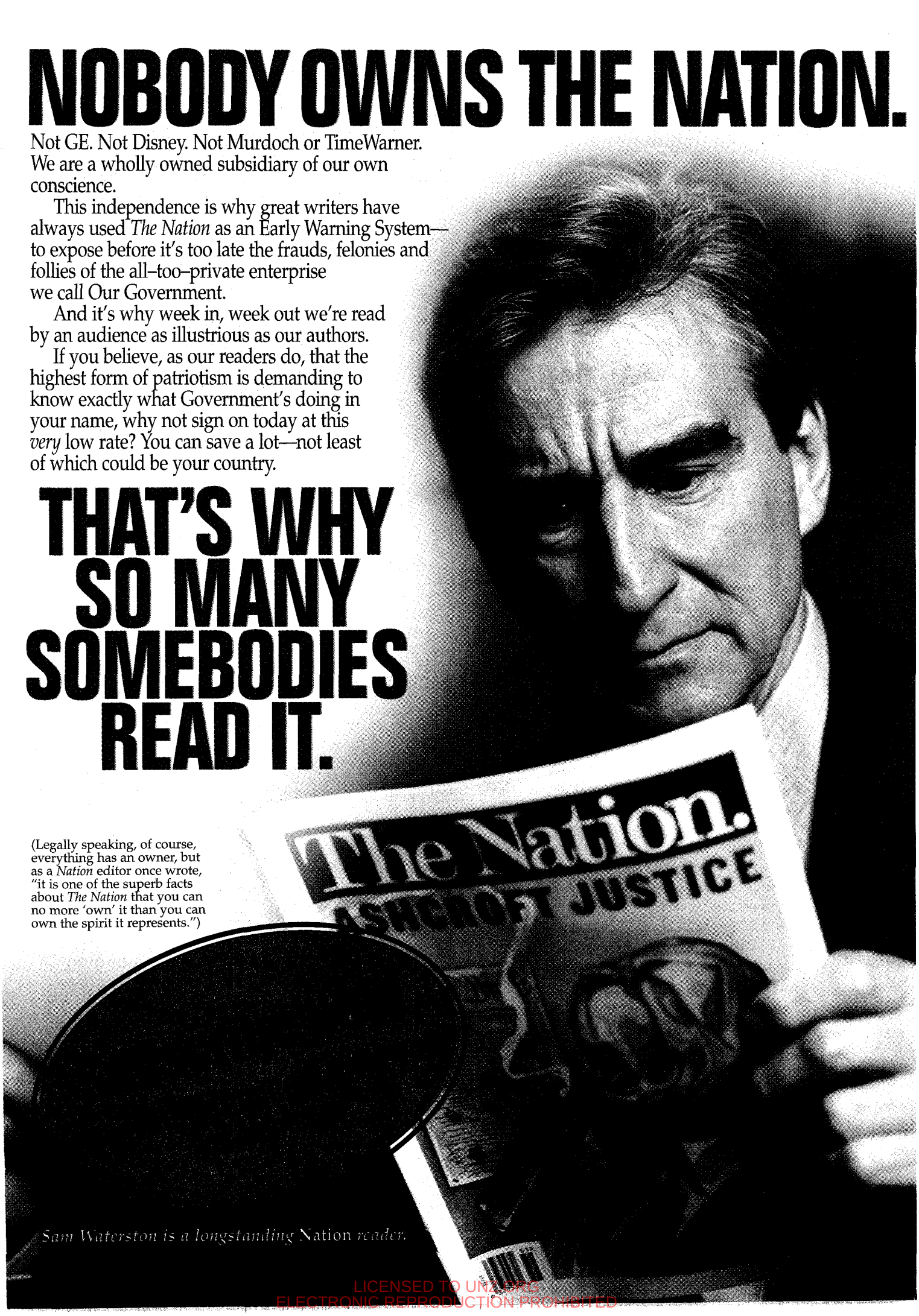

(Legally speaking, of course, everything has an owner, but as a *Nation* editor once wrote, "it is one of the superb facts about *The Nation* that you can no more 'own' it than you can own the spirit it represents.")

Sam Waterston is a longstanding Nation *reader.*

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EMPLOYEE FREE CHOICE

George Miller

Out-of-control costs for healthcare, housing, gasoline and college tuition are putting an ever tighter squeeze on American families' budgets. Congress can, and should, take action to relieve the pressure. Let's start by strengthening employees' rights to freely form labor unions.

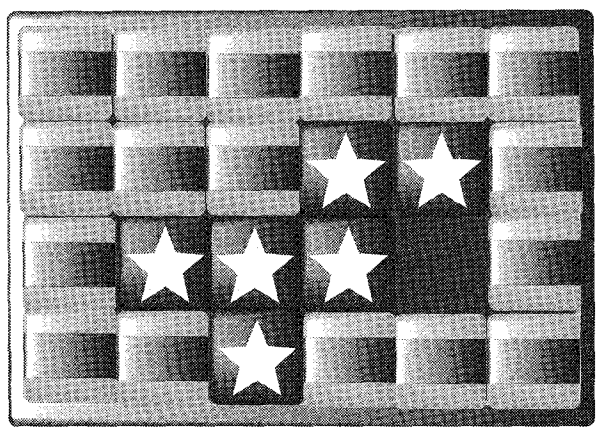
Research has shown unionized firms to be more productive than their nonunion rivals. And increasingly, unions are adopting flexible approaches that aim for common ground with employers to solve problems and develop new business opportunities. In Milwaukee union employees at Harley-Davidson crafted a plan with managers that both groups credit with increasing productivity and keeping the fabled motorcycle made in America. In California a collaboration at Kaiser Permanente has enabled managers and staff at the $28 billion healthcare firm to overcome what could have been a financial disaster without sacrificing patient care. Since launching its partnership with the Service Employees International Union, six other international unions and twenty-nine locals, Kaiser has boosted staff retention and patient satisfaction while reducing workplace injuries by 20 percent.

Given their potential to help iron out workplace problems and increase competitiveness, it is tragic that many managers insist on treating unions as threats. Employer intimidation tactics have proliferated dramatically. In the 1950s the National Labor Relations Board acted on hundreds of unionbusting complaints every year. In the 1990s the NLRB received more than 20,000 unionbusting complaints every year.

Along with antiunion firings and discrimination, unionbusters use other outrageous tactics to undermine their employees' freedom to unionize. One North Carolina pork-producing company paid employees to spy on co-workers suspected of organizing. Cintas, a uniform-rental and laundry company, had its supervisors follow employees into restrooms to make sure they weren't talking about unions. Wal-Mart, of course, maintains an antiunion SWAT team that bursts into action as soon as it suspects organizing activity.

We don't need employers waging class war in the workplace. That's why I've introduced the Employee Free Choice Act (HR 1696), which has the bipartisan backing of 207 Representatives and forty-one Senators. The bill strengthens organizing rights in three key ways. To begin with, if a majority of employees sign union cards, they get a union. Second, either party in an opening contract negotiation can request mediation or binding arbitration within a reasonable time period. (This is important because often—in about one-third of cases—workers win union representation but remain without a contract after a year of bargaining.) Finally, the act would stiffen penalties for labor-law violations.

As increasing numbers of workers collaborate with management through unions, we can preserve more middle-class jobs while making the economy more competitive. America's best employers already understand this. It is time the rest do, too.



George Miller, ranking Democrat on the House Committee on Education and the Workforce, has represented California's 7th District since 1975.

INTELLIGENT REFORM

John Tierney

Prisoners being held secretly, without counsel and apparently indefinitely. The Vice President imploring senators to exempt the CIA from US law, treaties and international norms prohibiting torture. A war justified by unsupportable information. Accounts of misconduct at Abu Ghraib and Guantánamo and secret prisons beyond US borders. Extensive use of national security letters to obtain, without warrant or subpoena, information on American citizens.

Just who is minding American intelligence? The answer should be Congress. In addition to passing legislation, oversight is one of the two major functions of Congress. Only when the House and Senate intelligence committees exercise their oversight responsibilities can we guarantee the safety of intelligence personnel and the civil liberties of our citizens.

Leaders of the Republican majority have consistently stifled efforts to reform our intelligence community. But recent catastrophes have stimulated healthy debate and created bipartisan coalitions for reform. There are two basic steps we must take to build on that momentum.

First, Congress has to revise and clarify the 1947 National Security Act. Ever since its passage, there has been tension between the executive and legislative branches over how (and how much) intelligence should be shared with Congress. The National Security Act requires sharing with Congress only "where appropriate"—a clear invitation to selective sharing. Once and for all, we must revise that measure to define what information is "appropriate" for sharing with Congress, when it's appropriate to share it and how many members of Congress should have access. The law should mandate that all information be promptly shared with members of the respective intelligence committees. Exceptions to sharing, if any can be persuasively defended, should be specifically enumerated in the amended law.

Second, we have to rein in a culture of official secrecy that results in the serious overclassification of information. Claiming security concerns, executive-branch agencies increasingly restrict or delay access to vital intelligence—often preventing or delaying Congress, or all but a handful in Congress, from having the facts. Then, even if the intelligence is shared with some, documents are classified to prohibit broader sharing. While the Bush Administration has used security threats to justify its excessive classification, emerging threats actually make the need for "real-time sharing" of sensitive information more urgent. The Congressional Joint Inquiry into September 11 strongly raised this issue, but few

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people took notice. Congress should follow the Joint Inquiry's recommendation: "Review the statutes, policies and procedures that govern the national security classification of intelligence." Current procedures are too often arbitrary and unjustified, and they inhibit intelligence oversight.

In post-9/11 America the need for better intelligence is clear. So is the need for disseminating that improved intelligence in a timely manner. Congress has to reclaim its key constitutional role in intelligence oversight to make sure that serious decisions are reached on the basis of what is best for the nation, not for a political party.

John Tierney, member of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, has represented Massachusetts's 6th District since 1997.

MODEL HEALTHCARE
Bob Filner

A decade ago American veterans' healthcare system had become notorious for its deteriorating facilities and mediocre quality of care. It was no way to treat our veterans. But under President Clinton the VA system underwent a sea change. Where it had mainly offered inpatient care in often dirty, antiquated hospitals, the VA system was rebuilt to focus on outpatient care in modern clinics built in locations readily accessible to veterans. Equally important, eligibility requirements were changed so that every veteran could enroll. The number of patients doubled to nearly 5 million a year, and the quality of care rose with it. By 2003 a study in *The New England Journal of Medicine* found that veterans' healthcare, once ridiculed by conservatives as a travesty of "socialized medicine," had come so far that it equaled or surpassed the quality of even the most expensive private healthcare systems in America. VA healthcare had transformed into a promising model for a full-scale public healthcare system.

Unfortunately, this success story might not have a happy ending. No matter how well run the system is, each year brings a new budget fight in Congress to keep it afloat. Every year, President Bush's requests have been far too modest to fund the VA system fully. Despite Democrats' efforts, the Republican majority in Congress refuses to meet the system's needs. As a result, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs has had to take action—most notably, preventing nondisabled veterans with incomes of $25,000 or more from receiving care.

In the future the VA's shortfall will likely grow worse, as thousands more soldiers come back from Iraq and Afghanistan physically disabled and mentally scarred. As of November nearly 16,000 had already been counted as wounded in Iraq alone. What kind of care will we give them?

The key to building on the VA's improvements is a secure budget that will guarantee—not just promise—that VA healthcare is fully funded every year. Representative Lane Evans has introduced a bill to do just that: the Assured Funding for Veterans' Healthcare Act of 2005 (HR 515). Assured Funding takes into account the most important factors in determining VA funding—inflation, predictable increases in enrollment—and automatically increases the budget each year to meet those needs.

Beyond the clear benefits to veterans, there's another reason Assured Funding is important. VA healthcare is a large-scale, government-funded system that is affordable and accessible in every part of the country—a miniature version of universal healthcare. And it's more cost-efficient than other health programs, because the VA system takes advantage of "quantity buying" of prescription drugs, resulting in a lower cost of medicine for the veterans.

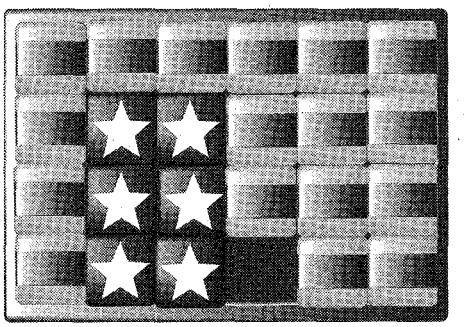
Maybe that's the real reason so many Republicans, despite their enthusiasm for war, don't want to give veterans the healthcare they deserve. For them, an American model for universal healthcare is dangerous. Let's adopt Assured Funding and keep it that way.

Bob Filner, member of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs, has represented California's 51st District since 1993.

ACCOUNTABLE CORPORATIONS
Sheila Jackson Lee

As they read about waste and fraud in the post-hurricane reconstruction—and in Iraq—my constituents in Houston are increasingly demanding stronger corporate accountability and oversight. Like Americans across the political spectrum, they see downsizing and outsourcing, excessive executive pay, the unjust dumping of pensions, accounting fraud, price gouging and other corporate abuses as fundamental threats to our democracy. They know the problem goes much deeper than some of the well-known "bad apples." They know the government condones the behavior of irresponsible corporations by giving them taxpayer subsidies and lucrative contracts.

It's time for Congress to demand that contracts and subsidies—federal loans, grants and tax breaks—are tied to responsible business practices. Federal regulations require that government contracts go only to "responsible" companies. But in Iraq, and now on the Gulf Coast, this standard is applied weakly; the awarding of no-bid or limited-bid contracts to corporations with government cronies as lobbyists or executives has taken even more teeth out of the accountability standards.



Congress must increase its oversight. An additional level of scrutiny should be applied to corporations with repeated violations of labor, consumer, environmental, human rights or antitrust laws, and those with multiple violations of contract-related laws (e.g., fraud or bribery). Companies that reincorporate offshore to avoid their fair share of taxes should have their tax and other benefits curtailed. A portion of their tax savings could be channeled into domestic programs that rebuild the refinery areas disabled by Hurricane Katrina.

We should use the federal purse to support a progressive vision of economic progress—one that benefits all Americans equally and creates as many good-paying jobs as possible. To promote that kind of responsibility, Congress should make any companies that do not provide full healthcare benefits to all full-time employees ineligible for federal contracts, loans, foreign aid and other subsidies—period.

As the FEMA disaster and the lobbying scandal have shown us, we also have to improve standards of transparency and accountability. Congress must reject unqualified appointees in public-safety and contract-oversight positions. We must stop the awarding of no-bid contracts to com-

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And you'll hear about celebrated controversies such as the debate over fossils from Mars. In 1996 NASA announced the discovery of fossil life forms in a Martian meteorite. Dr. Hazen describes the exhaustive battery of tests that supported the claims and the detailed counter arguments marshaled by skeptics. Dr. Hazen also discusses the hypothesis that life is a common phenomenon throughout the cosmos.

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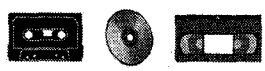

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panies with close ties to federal officials. Transparent and well-publicized "pre-bid" conferences, making a special effort to include minority-owned and small businesses and representatives of struggling communities, can also help level the playing field. A pre-bid conference in my Houston district in December helped insure that $1.5 billion in federal contracts was competitively and fairly awarded. Another way to improve transparency is to post federal contracts (and large subcontracts) on a publicly accessible online database, with links to information on the companies' records of compliance with the standards of accountability that I'm proposing. Let's allow the public to see where their money is going.

This kind of corporate responsibility program should draw support from across the political spectrum. Corporate accountability is less a question of partisan politics than of fiscal responsibility and national cohesiveness.

Sheila Jackson Lee, ranking Democrat on the House Judiciary Subcommittee on Immigration, Border Security and Claims, has represented Texas's 18th District since 1995.

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OUT OF IRAQ

Lynn Woolsey and Barbara Lee

With the official case for war long since discredited, the human and economic costs mounting and evidence growing that the Bush Administration's "stay the course" policy may keep us there indefinitely, it has never been clearer that the war in Iraq is a moral and functional failure. Human decency, fiscal sanity and national security demand that we move quickly to bring our soldiers home.

The insurgency will never be quelled as long as American troops are in Iraq. It's the occupation that gave rise to the insurgency in the first place. Every day that US boots are on Iraqi soil, militant anti-Americanism intensifies and more insurgents are created. As one American officer in Iraq bluntly put it: "We can't kill them all. When I kill one, I create three."

A radical shift in Iraq policy is long overdue. Sixty-one members of the House have signed a letter to the President offering concrete steps toward peace:

§ withdraw US forces from Iraq;

§ establish, through the United Nations and NATO, a multinational interim security force to keep Iraq secure and stable;

§ recast the US role in Iraq as reconstruction partner, not military occupier, stepping up efforts to rebuild economic infrastructure and renouncing plans to control Iraqi oil and create permanent military bases;

§ help establish an international peace commission, with global conflict-resolution experts overseeing postwar reconciliation and peace talks among Sunnis, Shiites and Kurds.

The President has hinted at troop reductions in the coming year, but we fear that any drawdown will be a cosmetic, cynically timed effort to minimize Republican losses in the 2006 elections. Bush warns, self-servingly, against "irresponsible debate" on Iraq. He is well aware that November's midterm elections offer progressives an opportunity to seize the initiative and define the withdrawal debate. Let's make the most of that historic opportunity. Let's remind voters that this war is not an isolated mistake but rather the central component of a flawed and destructive foreign policy. Let's insist that candidates—even if they claim to support troop reductions—say whether

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they support permanent military bases in Iraq. With the majority of Americans now seeing Bush's doctrine of pre-emptive war through the lens of its failure in Iraq, we can finally put to rest the myth that Republicans are "strong on defense"—and redefine the debate on security.

Lynn Woolsey, who has represented California's 6th District since 1993, and Barbara Lee, who has represented California's 9th District since 1998, co-chair the Congressional Progressive Caucus.

A UNIFIED SECURITY BUDGET
John Conyers

In my forty-two years in Congress, I've seen a lot of federal budgets get made. And I can tell you, it's a process that would give sausage-making a good name. Amid the kaleidoscopic process of allocating resources, and the endless array of committees with frequently overlapping jurisdictions, the big picture of our nation's priorities gets lost every time.

Take national security. In the last election, President Bush and Senator Kerry found some rare common ground here: They agreed that our top national security priority should be curbing the spread of nuclear, biological and chemical weapons, and especially keeping them away from terrorists. Few Americans would disagree.

But how best to do it? Clearly, invading and occupying countries suspected of having such weapons hasn't worked very well. Instead, how about destroying or locking up the existing stockpiles of these weapons around the world so that terrorists can't get their hands on them? Since 1991 we have used this strategy, with impressive results. The Nunn-Lugar Cooperative Threat Reduction program has deactivated almost 7,000 nuclear warheads and destroyed 600 intercontinental ballistic missiles for delivering them. But the job is far from finished. The 9/11 commission's report in 2004 warned that controlling worldwide nuclear stockpiles called for "maximum effort" by the US government to keep them out of terrorist hands. More than a year later the commission's follow-up report expressed alarm that so little had been done.

Why aren't we doing all we can to keep nuclear weapons away from terrorists? Last year we spent more than $60 billion on the war in Iraq. By contrast, we spent little more than $1 billion on the worldwide lock-down approach. Does that sound like a smart way to allocate security dollars? Yet Congress's budget process makes it hard for members to make those kinds of comparisons and weigh priorities wisely. The dollar amounts for the invasion approach are funded overwhelmingly by the Defense Department budget; funding for the lock-down approach is spread across several departments. There is no systematic discussion of how best to balance, and fund, our national security priorities. We end up spending less than 2 percent of what we pay out for war on the strategy most likely to keep us safe.

Let's bring some rationality to our budgeting for security. The first step is to have the Congressional Budget Office prepare a Unified Security Budget. Here, we would bring together three broad functions under the same budgetary umbrella: offense (primarily the military); defense (primarily homeland security); and prevention (primarily international affairs).

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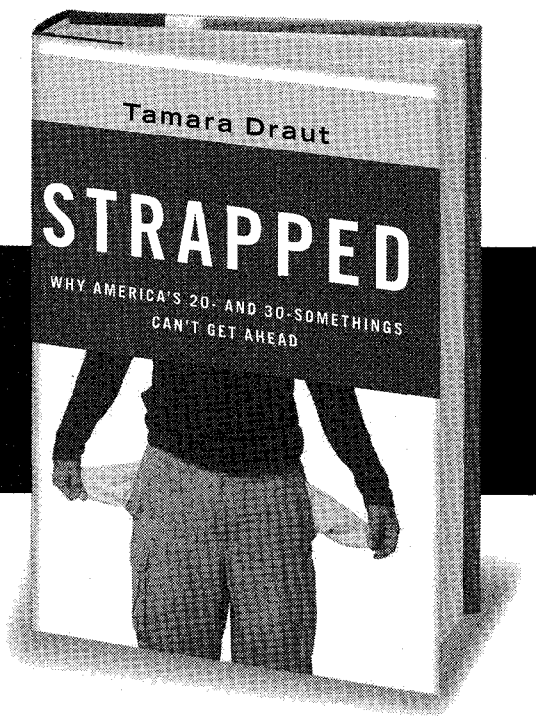

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This seemingly simple step would give us a mechanism for examining, and fully debating, our big-picture security priorities. A Unified Security Budget would allow us to ask the important questions, like: Do we really want to spend thirty times as much on military solutions that don't work as on nonmilitary strategies with a proven track record of success? It's time for a budget process that encourages members of Congress to grapple with that vital question.

John Conyers, ranking Democrat on the House Committee on the Judiciary, has represented Michigan's 14th District since 1964.

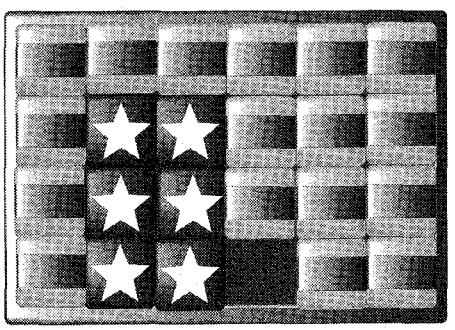
COMING CLEAN & GREEN
Raul Grijalva

Much of the progress made over the past four decades in protecting the environment has been reversed by the Bush Administration. Its priorities are clear: The interests of corporate contributors always trump the public's well-being.

We saw those priorities at work in the response to Hurricane Katrina, when the Administration used the tragedy as a pretext to waive environmental and public-health laws considered inconvenient by its corporate cronies. We also saw it in three destructive bills pushed by the Administration and passed by the Republican House in 2005. The Gasoline for America's Security Act would compensate oil and gas companies for financial hits taken during delays in approval of drilling permits. Likewise, the "reformed" Endangered Species Act would offer compensation for land-use permits denied or delayed because of concerns about the impact on endangered species—and would allow corporate landowners to set the value of their own alleged loss. Fortunately, those bills have not been passed by the Senate and become law. But the Energy Policy Act of 2005 has. This measure gives huge subsidies to some of the richest companies in the world while ignoring the energy needs of working Americans.

Bush's environmental "reforms" put corporations over public welfare—and show a disrespect for democracy. Since its passage in 1969, the National Environmental Policy Act has required the government to disclose the impact of its actions on the environment. NEPA has improved decision-making, transparency and public participation. But its protections are being steadily chipped away, with President Bush having pushed for—and gotten—repeated waivers of NEPA environmental review. While the House has created a task force to rethink NEPA, House Republicans continue to pass bills waiving NEPA review. The Energy Policy Act, for one, waives environmental review for oil and gas drilling on many sites.

While Democrats unite to fend off coming attacks—not only on NEPA but also on measures like the Clean Air and Clean Water acts—we should also take the offensive and get the country moving again toward an environmentally healthy future. We need to support Congressman Jay Inslee's New Apollo Energy Act, which would give companies incentives to develop clean energy technologies while reducing the threat of global warming. This would put the United States in its rightful place as a leader in energy innovation and would create thousands of new jobs.



We also need to bring public land-use laws up-to-date, reflecting our society's evolving understanding of the need for protecting natural lands. Under the multiple-use doctrine governing public lands, for example, "extraction," like oil and gas drilling, is given equal footing with resource protection. But Americans increasingly value public lands as places for recreation and to find relief from the stresses of modern life—more than for their production of coal or timber. Congress should update our laws to elevate preservation over other uses.

We must develop responsible policies that express our real "moral values"—insuring that the air we breathe, the water we drink and the communities in which we live are safe, not only for ourselves but for future generations.

Raul Grijalva, chair of the House Democratic Environmental Task Force, has represented Arizona's 7th District since 2003.

TRADING UP
Sherrod Brown

Last year's titanic battle over the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) forever changed the debate over globalization. For the first time, concerns about the lack of labor standards in US trade agreements rose to the top of the agenda. Dozens of House and Senate members began to see the pain inflicted on American families and communities by a wrongheaded trade policy.

Had members of Congress been allowed to vote their consciences, CAFTA would have failed. Instead, when then–House majority leader Tom DeLay called a late-night vote last July, several Republican members switched their votes amid threats of lost highway-construction money for their districts and promises of committee chairmanships and campaign contributions. The procedural antics and arm-twisting proved just enough to muster a 217–215 vote in favor of the agreement.

Even so, the CAFTA vote—and the debate that preceded it—showed how very much has changed in the politics and substance of trade. A decade earlier 40 percent of House Democrats had voted for the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). This time 93 percent of us voted no. Our arguments were bolstered by several dozen groups advocating for workers and the poor both in the US and in developing nations. The only support for CAFTA, in fact, seemed to come from large corporations, the White House and Republican Congressional leaders.

A few weeks after the CAFTA vote, US Trade Representative Rob Portman visited Capitol Hill to lay the groundwork for AFTA, the Andean Free Trade Agreement, which looks no better than previous trade agreements in terms of environmental standards, food safety or fair labor practices. Portman was met with skepticism from House Democrats who consider themselves free traders. Representative Artur Davis of Alabama called agreements like CAFTA "so empty and so vacant of values." For the time being, plans for AFTA have been tabled. But similar "free trade" agreements are on the way.

How can we do better? I introduced a measure last November, House Resolution 295, which calls for strong environmental

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and food-safety standards in trade agreements. My bill also incorporates the five core International Labor Organization standards: the right to associate; the right to organize and bargain collectively; and prohibitions on child labor, forced labor and workplace discrimination. The resolution would not affect previous trade agreements, but would provide crucial guidelines for the future. Of course, those guidelines must also include an enforceable international minimum wage.

As the CAFTA vote showed, every element of the Democratic caucus is now in general agreement on trade. Comparable numbers would vote for a trade agreement that guarantees food safety, treats workers fairly and protects the environment. And they wouldn't be alone: There is substantial and growing support from Republicans. Representative Walter Jones, a conservative and devout Christian from North Carolina, led the Republican whip efforts against CAFTA by appealing to religious principles, family values and national unity. Democrats and Republicans of faith—whether they're motivated by faith in God or faith in the principles of plain social and economic justice—will continue to find common ground in pursuing a better trade policy.

Sherrod Brown, ranking Democrat on the House Energy and Commerce Health Subcommittee, has represented Ohio's 13th District since 1993.

SAVING SMALL FARMERS
Marcy Kaptur

We all know that small farmers are in crisis. What many Americans don't realize is just how much worse things are getting. Because of trade policies like NAFTA, the United States will become a net importer of agricultural products in 2006. While agricultural subsidies have risen to record levels, the prices American farmers receive for crops like corn, wheat, soybeans, cotton and rice have fallen 40 percent since 1996. Some farmers have been able to survive temporarily through emergency payments and subsidies from the government; others, like their counterparts in developing countries around the world, are selling off or abandoning their land. The American dream of small farming is dying.

Congress has a chance to address the crisis in 2007, when the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 expires. While recent debate has focused on subsidies, they are just a Band-Aid on the real wound: prices being controlled by the global agricultural giants. Despite being championed as a boon to small farmers, recent trade agreements have benefited the giants, not those who grow the products. Making matters worse, we have seen a steady erosion of domestic programs that used to benefit farmers by insulating them from volatile prices and correcting the inherent tendency to over-produce. The government has allowed those mega-brokers to dictate policies that benefit them—and kill small farms.

Agribusiness is thriving in global markets governed by trade agreements favoring it over small farmers. Cargill has cornered about a quarter of global grain production. Two companies, Monsanto and Pioneer, control 60 percent of the US corn and soybean seed market. The top four beef packers dominate 83

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percent of the market; four pork packers control 64 percent of the pork market; and the top four poultry processors account for 50 percent of that market. This concentration allows these companies more power to set prices—and further squeeze out small producers. Small farmers are reduced to mere contract growers, with little power to negotiate.

We need a system that will boost farm prices, both domestically and globally, to better reflect the true costs of production. That means several things: stepping up regulation of agribusiness worldwide; reviving domestic price-support systems that benefit the farmer first, not the big broker; strengthening rules against agricultural dumping internationally; and managing domestic supply through food security reserves, energy reserves and conservation set-asides.

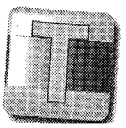
We also have to recapture the market in our communities. In many places it is almost impossible to find locally produced products because big grocery chains prefer to deal with high-volume wholesalers. I have introduced the Farmers Market Infrastructure Assistance Act (HR 710), which would construct, improve and rehabilitate local farmers markets. We also must find ways to take advantage of other promising markets for local farmers—school lunch and breakfast programs, senior citizen meal centers and hospitals.

Our energy crisis also holds the promise of a new domestic market. The byproducts and waste of agricultural production can be used to produce clean and renewable energy like ethanol, biodiesel and biomass. I have introduced the Biofuels Energy Independence Act (HR 388), which would fund the production, development, storage and marketing of all forms of biofuels.

These proposals only scratch the surface of creative, farmer-friendly solutions that must address the destructive trade policies of recent years. All it takes is some good, old-fashioned ingenuity—along with leadership that supports America's farmers and ranchers. It's time to tell the big operators that they've had their day.

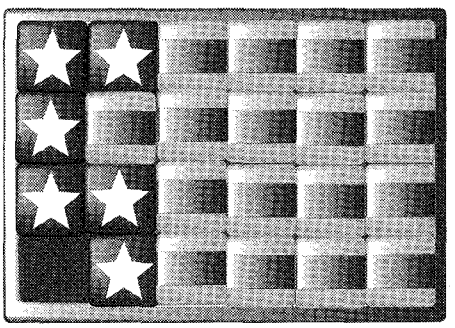
Marcy Kaptur, member of the House Committee on Appropriations, has represented Ohio's 9th District since 1983.

EDUCATION MOBILIZATION
Major Owens



The United States spends a far smaller percentage of its national budget on education than other developed—and developing—nations. Not only do we lack the skilled workforce we need; we are accumulating masses of dysfunctional citizens who imperil our society.

The only solution is to aggressively place education at the top of our federal budget priorities, where military spending now sits. We must increase the federal government's share of public education financing from 8 to 25 percent.



Nothing less than a plan for total national mobilization will suffice. Band-Aids for education reform are obsolete. While some parts of the country already have schools capable of achieving maximum student outputs, a critical percentage of the school-age population resides in densely populated urban areas where education productivity is either stagnant or accelerating downward. This abandonment of inner-city millions constitutes a waste of human resources that places the nation at risk. The danger is not simply that we will lack the skilled workforce and decision-making capacity we need. From burglars and car-jackers to suicide bombers, we can also expect continuous rebellions fomenting fear and terror.

Ending these dangers starts with committing the dollars needed to give every inner-city student the same opportunities to learn that many suburban students now have. Federal increases would pay for higher salaries, better staff development programs and improved working conditions to attract and keep qualified teachers. The money would also pay for modernization and reconstruction.

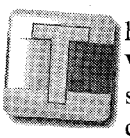
We have recognized that the mass-production of science and engineering graduates in China and India is challenging America's commercial competitiveness. But we're ignoring equally threatening shortages and systemic scarcity above and below those super high-tech occupational categories. We have a critical need for translators of Arabic, Urdu, Pashto and Chinese. There are only seventy Arab studies departments in our 4,000 colleges and universities, and just sixty-seven Chinese studies departments.

At the bread-and-butter level we are also failing to produce enough qualified technicians and mechanics to service our cars, wire our houses and fix our plumbing. Well-meaning efforts to end the "stigma" of vocational education have left us with nothing to replace it. It's one more gap that penalizes the economy and breeds youthful bitterness.

Establishing and maintaining a first-rate education system will allow the nation to draw on its greatest supply of untapped human resources: the children of our inner cities.

Major Owens, ranking Democrat on the Workforce Protection Subcommittee of the House Committee on Education and the Workforce, has represented New York's 11th District since 1983.

GOOD GOVERNMENT
Henry Waxman



There is a desperate need in Washington for more oversight, transparency and accountability. The checks and balances of our Constitution don't work when the White House and the Congressional leadership work together to shield government corruption and abuse from scrutiny.

The past five years of one-party rule have produced one of the greatest concentrations of power in America's history. The Republican-controlled Congress has ceased to function as an independent branch of government. Genuine legislative debate has vanished. Congressional committees rarely exercise their oversight responsibilities.

The consequences have been disastrous. Congress never held hearings that challenged the White House's distortion of intelligence in its rush to war in Iraq. Congress never questioned the President's reckless fiscal policies. And Congress never protested when Administration cronies

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were installed as heads of essential federal agencies like the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

Not surprisingly, the disappearance of oversight and accountability has been an invitation to corruption. A growing list of Washington Republicans, from lobbyists to members of Congress to the Vice President's chief of staff, are either under indictment or under investigation for shakedowns, bribery and other crimes.

Fortunately, there is an agenda that will promote core American values and revive the nation's faith in government. Democrats on the House Committee on Government Reform have introduced legislation that would restore open government, block political cronies from being appointed to essential public health and safety positions, prohibit government spending on covert propaganda and stop the growing politicization of science.

Our Hurricane Katrina Accountability and Contracting Reform Act would ban "monopoly contracts" used to shield politically well-connected companies from price competition in government contracts, and it would stop the revolving door between government and industry that has created billions in wasteful spending. Our Open Government bill would bring back the old-fashioned idea that government information belongs to the public; it would halt the proliferation of pseudo-classifications like "For Official Use Only" and "Sensitive but Unclassified" that the Bush Administration has used to hide embarrassing facts.

Unfortunately, the public has heard virtually nothing about these proposals. The Republicans running Congress have kept them bottled up so effectively that not one single piece of the Democratic good-government agenda has been brought up for a vote in the House.

While each week brings to light new evidence of corruption, subterfuge and wasteful spending, there are many well-developed proposals for change waiting for a fair chance to be enacted. They will get that fair chance if Americans elect a Democratic Congress in 2006 and send a signal that they want honesty and accountability restored to government.

Henry Waxman, ranking Democrat on the Committee on Government Reform, has represented California's 30th District since 1975.

RAISING UP YOUTH
Diane Watson

In last year's State of the Union address, President Bush highlighted the growing threat of youth violence, touting his Administration's commitment to tackle the problem. Unfortunately, the President's rhetoric did not square with his budget request. Funding for the Justice Department juvenile justice programs was cut by almost 40 percent. And this came on top of severe cuts to the same programs stretching back to 2002.

That won't come as news in my home district, Los Angeles County, which has suffered from an epidemic of youth homicides and violence. The State Attorney General's office reports that homicide rates among California youth, which had steadily declined since the peak year of 1993, are once again growing. The rates are particularly high among African-Americans and Hispanics. Handgun violence has risen. And the upswing in youth violence is not limited to Los Angeles County.

As President Bush's budget-slashing has made clear, it's up to Congress to get

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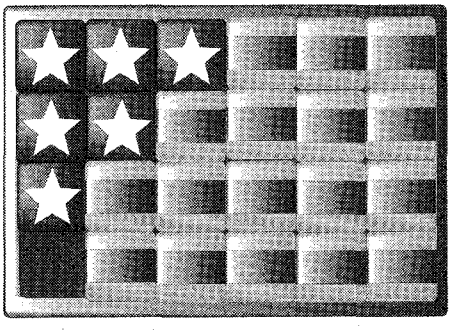
serious about reducing youth and gang violence. That means, first and foremost, recognizing that punitive measures—stiffer sentences, more correctional facilities, prosecuting juveniles as adults—are proven nonstarters for reducing gang violence. In fact, prisons are often ideal venues for gang organizing and recruitment. Rather than another round of "lock 'em up" policies that are guaranteed to fail, Congress should step up funding for programs that have proven effective at the local level. Byrne grants and Community Oriented Policing programs, which promote partnerships among state, local and federal agencies involved in juvenile law-enforcement and intervention programs, must be funded at sustainable levels and not zeroed out of the budget, as was proposed in the Bush Administration's budget request last year. Resources also need to flow to family intervention programs. Research shows that chronic juvenile offenders who participate in intensive family therapy are almost two-thirds less likely to be re-arrested within four years. Many of these programs have been found so cost-effective that they more than pay for themselves.



Congress should also create something new: a public/private partnership forged to allay youth violence. A growing number of youth offenders are being assigned to alternative or "transition" schools for problem students. These institutions need—but few can afford—extracurricular activities that will help steer their students away from violence.

That's why I intend to introduce legislation in the next few months that would require alternative school students to either perform 150 hours of community service or to intern with a local business or nonprofit group. Participating businesses would receive a specified tax credit for each student they sponsor. Additional tax relief would apply if a student is hired after high school graduation.

Effective programs to reduce youth violence involve partnerships like that—creative collaborations among local, state and national law enforcement, and among social service agencies, parents and schools. Rather than continuing to pursue failed policies that rely heavily on punitive measures, we need to fund partnerships and programs that will help young people who badly need it, and make the country safer.

Diane Watson, ranking Democrat on the House Subcommittee on Energy and Resources, has represented California's 33rd District since 2001.

REALISTIC IMMIGRATION
Hilda Solis

Immigrants have always been the backbone of our society. As in the past, millions of immigrants today make mighty contributions to our economic and cultural prosperity. They are our neighbors, co-workers, schoolmates, fellow worshipers and friends. Unfortunately, our outdated immigration system relegates many of them to the shadows of American society. Undocumented immigrants often risk their lives crossing dangerous border regions in search of the American dream. Once they're here, many live a nightmare. They fear government institutions delivering social services like healthcare and education. They have no political representation. And when we debate immigration reform, they are the first people we forget.

We forget the 65,000 undocumented students who graduate each year from US high schools. Despite their successes these graduates have limited access to affordable tuition or financial aid for higher education; their immigration status lands them in a life of uncertainty. We also forget immigrant families. Under current law, spouses and young children often end up waiting seven years or more to reunite.

We need a comprehensive, realistic approach to immigration reform—one that not only addresses the hardships of immigrants and their families but also improves national security by documenting the immigrants who are here. Just such a comprehensive reform bill was floated last year: the bipartisan Secure America and Orderly Immigration Act of 2005. But once again, lawmakers showed their tendency to ignore the complexity of the immigration problem; the measure was introduced this past May but has still not come up for a vote.

As Congress continues to debate immigration reform, the emphasis remains on bulking up border security and enforcement—the same approach that has exacerbated the immigration crisis. But we know that enforcement-only policies do not work. Between 1990 and 2000 the US Border Patrol nearly tripled in size, while the number of undocumented immigrants continued to soar. This should come as no surprise. As long as there is no system that allows them to migrate legally, undocumented immigrants will continue to find ways to enter the country illegally.

It is time to implement a plan that grants legal status to hardworking and taxpaying immigrant workers already established in this country. Immigrant students should be given legal permanent residence, and full and equal access to fair college tuition rates and financial aid. Immigrant families should have a clear, efficient path to reunifying. Immigrant workers should be documented, allowing them to enjoy the rights and to exercise the responsibilities of US citizens.

We can heighten national security while bringing millions of hard-working immigrants out of the shadows and into full citizenship. But first we have to give up the illusion that enforcement alone can solve our immigration crisis.

Hilda Solis, co-chair of the Congressional Caucus for Women's Issues, has represented California's 32nd District since 2001.

THE BIG FIX
Dennis Kucinich

Soon after Hurricane Katrina ripped through New Orleans and the Gulf Coast, destroying hundreds of thousands of homes and jobs, President Bush said the region looked like it had been obliterated by a weapon. It was. Indifference is a weapon of mass destruction. And the Bush Administration's indifference to the economic security of New Orleans residents continues to this day.

For the 500,000 evacuees still not back in their homes, unemployment is epidemic: About one-quarter of whites, and one-half of African-Americans, are still out of work. It's not because jobs are scarce; in

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fact, there is a labor shortage in New Orleans. Most of those who have returned from the Katrina diaspora have found jobs. The massive unemployment is caused by the lack of housing near the reconstruction job sites.

The indifferent Bush Administration, through the now-infamous FEMA, is compounding the unemployment problems of hurricane victims. FEMA located the largest temporary housing facility for evacuees ninety-one miles from New Orleans, in Baker, Louisiana. That's hardly a reasonable commute, especially for low-income folks. Barry Kaufman, business manager of Local 689 of the Construction and General Laborers, told the *New York Times* he had "at least 2,000" evacuees willing to take cleanup jobs. The trouble was getting them there; the local's hiring hall, along with thousands of evacuees, has been displaced to Baton Rouge, more than an hour's drive away.

So the cleanup jobs are going to out-of-town contractors, young single out-of-towners and undocumented workers. Not that these folks are getting a great deal either: President Bush suspended the Davis-Bacon Act, requiring that the area's average wage be paid on all federal construction projects. George Miller led the fight in Congress to roll back that suspension. But the President also lifted the requirement that all federal contractors have an affirmative-action plan, and the Department of Homeland Security granted a waiver to employers from collecting the immigration status of reconstruction hires.

Unlike the damage caused by Katrina, these problems are entirely man-made—and they can be solved. Several steps can be taken to address the employment problems the Administration has exacerbated. First, we need to put housing near jobs. ACORN has recommended that temporary housing facilities be re-sited in New Orleans, or as near the city as possible.

Second, all federal reconstruction contracts, subcontracts and grants should require corporate recipients to hire locally. A high standard, such as the 50 percent requirement in Senator Ted Kennedy's bill, or the 40 percent level in the Congressional Black Caucus's bill, should be the guide.

Third, let's recognize that New Orleans today is an extreme microcosm of America—saddled with a broken infrastructure and significant unemployment at a time when federal budget deficits are peaking and dampening the prospects of adequate rebuilding money. Nationally, estimates of what it will take to fix our crumbling infrastructure exceed $1 trillion.

Where will the money come from? Congress should direct the Federal Reserve to make zero-interest loans available to states and municipalities for the express purpose of modernizing and repairing our nation's schools, water systems, bridges and streets. These loans would be integrated into the normal open-market operations of the Fed, which controls the nation's money supply in a similar way.

I will be introducing the Repairing America's Infrastructure Act, a bill that already has bipartisan support, in the upcoming session of Congress. While creatively financing the rebuilding of New Orleans, we can start rebuilding the rest of America's infrastructure—and creating good jobs, with fair wages, in the process.

Dennis Kucinich, ranking Democrat on the House Government Reform Subcommittee on National Security, Emerging Threats and International Relations, has represented Ohio's 10th District since 1997.

COMMENT

(Continued From Page 6)

among antichoice activists and—because it would reclassify methods including the IUD, the pill and other hormonal forms of contraception as abortion—severely undercuts Alito's reassurances that he supports the right to birth control. Without these devices, women would be left only with condoms and the rhythm method to prevent pregnancy.

Other Alito decisions not related to reproduction appear designed to strip women of their power and dignity (and, in one frequently noted case, poor little girls of their clothes, even when they're not named in search warrants). The issue of Vanguard, which came up mostly in reference to Alito's failure to recuse himself from cases involving that money-management company despite having investments in it, also involves the rights of women, like the plaintiff, a widow named Shantee Maharaj. As her lawyer, John Flynn, pointed out, Maharaj had nothing to her name but the Vanguard IRA her husband had left her. Alito voted to support others' right to raid the account, despite IRAs supposedly being safe from creditors, and he blocked Maharaj from obtaining the funds it contained. Maharaj lost her home in the almost decade-long fight over the Vanguard account, a fact that never made it into the hearing.

We did, however, hear much about Alito's humble character, the case for which hinged on the fact that he's an Italian-American, didn't join an eating club at Princeton and lives in New Jersey. Details about the few females who had a voice in the hearings, meanwhile, were unmistakably human against the backdrop of fine suits, white hair and testosterone. Dianne Feinstein, the only woman on the Judiciary Committee, spearheaded the abortion-related questioning along with Durbin and Charles Schumer. Democratic Representative Debbie Wasserman Schultz, of Florida, said she was testifying not just as a member of Congress but also in her "most rewarding role: as the mother of three young children who will come of age in an America guided by many of the decisions that this Court will make."

Meanwhile, Kate Michelman, former president of NARAL Pro-Choice America, and the only witness to devote her testimony to women's reproductive rights, told of the humiliation of having a pre-*Roe* abortion, in 1969. Then the mother of three young children, Michelman had to submit to questioning about the intimate details of her life and seek out the approval of her husband, who had deserted her during her pregnancy, before being granted permission to have the procedure.

It was hard not to reflect on the parallel tellings of Michelman's personal story. Once again, she was reduced to recounting the details of her trauma in the desperate hope that she might convey a woman's life to a group of men. The first time around, the young Michelman was successful, convincing the doctors she deserved an abortion. More than thirty years later, it's not clear that she managed to get the men in power to understand what's at stake for women with Alito's appointment to the Court.

Most Americans don't want Alito appointed if he will vote to

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COMMENT

overturn *Roe*, according to numerous polls. The impact of his appointment—and outrage over it—wouldn't be spread evenly between the sexes, though. According to Kim Gandy, president of the National Organization for Women, "Women will have a very, very long memory and will lay their losses at the feet of the Republicans and at the feet of whichever Democrats help put this ultra-conservative man on the Supreme Court." SHARON LERNER

Sharon Lerner is a senior fellow at the Center for New York City Affairs at Milano Graduate School, New School University.

In Fact . . .

CHILE'S CHOICE

■ Marc Cooper writes: The election of Socialist pediatrician Michelle Bachelet as Chile's first woman president and one of the very few female heads of state in Latin American history was good news. But her potential to enact more than symbolic change must be viewed with skepticism. Her Socialist Party, governing in alliance with the center-right Christian Democrats, has refused to fundamentally alter or reform the "savage capitalist" economic system imposed by the Pinochet dictatorship. Chile is one of the most unequal economies in the world, producing fabulous wealth for a few and just-above-subsistence for many. A victim of torture under the Pinochet regime (as was her father, an air force general), Bachelet should be more aggressive than her predecessors in allowing prosecution of the perpetrators of torture and murder. She should also show the courage to enact significant economic reforms. The broken private pension system cries out for attention, as do underfunded schools and the dilapidated public health system. The Chilean minimum wage needs a hyper-boost, and the 8 percent unemployment rate must be lowered by a public works program. If Bachelet doesn't take bold steps to re-engage Chileans in political life, the novelty of her gender will very soon wear thin.

PRO-IMPEACHMENT MAJORITY

■ In a recent Zogby poll, commissioned by AfterDowningStreet.org, 52 percent of respondents agreed with the proposition that if President Bush wiretapped American citizens without the approval of a judge, "Congress should consider holding him accountable through impeachment." In last week's *Nation* Elizabeth Holtzman made the case that Bush's illegal authorization of warrantless wiretapping was cause for impeachment. In a recent tough speech, Al Gore made a similar case—minus the I-word. "What we do know about this pervasive wiretapping," he said, "virtually compels the conclusion that the President of the United States has been breaking the law repeatedly and persistently. A President who breaks the law is a threat to the very structure of our government."

PAYBACK TIME FOR WAL-MART

■ Katrina vanden Heuvel and Sam Graham-Felsen write: On January 12 Maryland's legislature overturned Republican Governor Robert Ehrlich's veto and passed the Fair Share Health Care Act, which makes Maryland the first state in the nation to require that Wal-Mart and other large companies devote a share of their payroll to health benefits. "This is an incredible victory for Maryland families, children and taxpayers," said Chris Kofinis of the Wake Up Wal-Mart campaign. "It proves that the American people have the power to hold large corporations like Wal-Mart accountable." More than half of Wal-Mart's 1.3 million employees nationwide must rely on Medicaid programs because they're not covered by the company's health insurance. Laws similar to Maryland's are being introduced in at least thirty other states. "What you will see," said Kofinis, "is that other states will follow Maryland's lead, and the pressure on Wal-Mart to change into a responsible company will grow and grow."

THE TRUE COST OF IRAQ

■ Remember when White House economic adviser Lawrence Lindsey was sacked for predicting that the Iraq War would cost up to $200 billion? And neocons embedded in the Administration were airily saying, Oh, a year's Iraqi oil revenues will pay for the whole show? Two years later the bill keeps rising. Congress has appropriated $251 billion thus far for military operations, but the real costs will go much, much higher, according to two recent independent economic studies. They estimate the total dollar price of Bush's war, assuming it continues into 2015, at more than *$1 trillion*. The studies—by Scott Wallsten, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution, and Nobel Prize–winning economist Joseph Stiglitz, with Linda Bilmes of Harvard—include the value of each military and civilian life, the expense of lifetime care for thousands of disabled vets, lost productivity by activated reserves and more. The papers can be accessed on *The Economists' Voice*, a web journal (www.bepress.com/ev).

ANNOUNCING... A STUDENT WRITING PRIZE

■ We're pleased to announce the *Nation* Student Writing Contest. We're looking for original, thoughtful, provocative student voices to tell us what issue is of most concern to their generation. Essays should not exceed 800 words and should be original, unpublished work that demonstrates fresh, clear thinking and superior quality of expression and craftsmanship. We'll select five finalists and one winner, who will be awarded a $500 cash prize and a *Nation* subscription. The winning essay will be published in the magazine and featured on our website. The five finalists will be awarded $100 each and subscriptions, and their entries will be published online. The contest is open to students at American high schools and to undergraduates at American colleges and universities. Entries (only one per student) will be accepted through March 31. A winner will be announced by May 31. Please send entries to studentprize@thenation.com. For more information go to www.thenation.com.

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BOOKS & THE ARTS

Pity the Region

AUGUSTUS RICHARD NORTON

THE GREAT WAR FOR CIVILISATION: The Conquest of the Middle East.
By Robert Fisk.
Knopf. 1,107 pp. $40.

In March 1991 Shiites in southern Iraq were being slaughtered en masse. President George H.W. Bush had called upon the Iraqis to topple Saddam Hussein after the US-led coalition defeated the Iraqi army in Kuwait. The Shiites heeded the call with vigor and savagery, as did their Kurdish countrymen in the north, but now the reconsolidated Baathist regime was striking back, killing tens of thousands. Using helicopter gunships that Gen. Norman Schwarzkopf rashly permitted them to operate under the terms of the previous month's cease-fire agreement, as well as ground forces, Saddam's forces pulverized the rebellion. Many of the mass graves that have been recently unearthed are from this period.

While this was going on the Americans stood by and watched, often literally. One of the more disgraceful moral lapses in US history, this moment of "betrayal" fundamentally recast Shiite identity in Iraq. Advocates of the latest invasion—who were caught off-guard by the lukewarm reception Iraqi Shiites accorded their would-be liberators in 2003—seem to have slept through that part of the movie. US officials up and down the line did little to mitigate, much less end, the suffering of the Shiites, perhaps in deference to the wishes of their ally Saudi Arabia, for whom the prospect of a Shiite-dominated Iraq is no more inviting now than it was then. Only Iran offered substantial help, which would later yield dividends in credibility for Tehran and for groups it supported, as the elections in Iraq have revealed.

There was at least one American hero in 1991, Staff Sergeant Nolde of the First Armored Division. Robert Fisk, who never learned Nolde's first name, met him at a crossroad in Safwan, the southern Iraqi border town where Nolde's platoon sat while refugees desperately tried to flee to Kuwait. Ordered by a US official to turn them back to the killing fields in southern Iraq, where they were almost certain to die, Nolde responded:

> "I'm sorry, sir. But if you're going to give me an order to stop these people, I can't do that. They are coming here begging, old women crying, sick children, boys begging for food. We're already giving them most of our rations. But I have to tell you, sir, that if you give me an order to stop them, I just won't do that." You could see the embassy man wince.

Alas, US foreign policy is not set by the likes of Nolde, which helps to explain why the United States is widely derided and unloved, not just in the Middle East. This makes it all the more important to come to grips with the double standards and hypocrisies that have come to connote American foreign policy to many people around the globe.

The Great War for Civilisation is Fisk's magnum opus, gathering three decades' worth of reporting on the Middle East.

Fisk's magnum opus is not just about America in the Middle East, but America has a starring role in *The Great War for Civilisation* and it is not a flattering one. She is America, righteous of voice but tone-deaf to history, jealous of power but so entwined with Israel that she sometimes reads the other character's lines as her own. Notwithstanding Fisk's penchant for denying the powerful the benefit of the doubt, there is more than enough truth in his depiction to show that George W. Bush's promises to the oppressed (notably in his January 2005 inaugural speech) are more rodomontade than factual, especially when the President

Augustus Richard Norton, professor of anthropology and international relations at Boston University, is the author of Amal and the Shi'a: Struggle for the Soul of Lebanon *(Texas).*

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claimed, "All who live in tyranny and hopelessness can know: The United States will not ignore your oppression, or excuse your oppressors. When you stand for your liberty, we will stand with you." It is impossible to read Fisk's book—replete as it is with evidence of US complicity with dictators, selective tolerance for political violence and erratic respect for human rights—and hear Bush's claims as other than crowd-pleasing boilerplate.

Fisk, the London *Independent*'s senior Middle East correspondent, is one of the best-known—and most polarizing—war reporters, one of the few print journalists with adoring fans and equally passionate detractors. The *Independent*, after discovering that most of its web hits came from Fisk readers, began charging a fee for his columns, well before other papers in Europe and North America were charging for "premium content." Now one may buy several news packages, including "Robert Fisk" for £50 a year (about $90). It is tempting to compare him to Howard Stern or Rush Limbaugh for the exclamations of fierce loyalty or disdain that his pugnacious columns inspire. But Fisk is more serious than either man and, as *The Great War for Civilisation* exhaustively demonstrates, he has a command of his subject worthy of a historian.

Fisk draws the title of his book from an inscription on the flip side of the World War I victory medal awarded to his father, Bill Fisk, whose service in that war was the signal experience of an otherwise unexceptional life. As a boy, Robert got a glimpse of war's ravages during family excursions to European battlefields, and his father earned a rare ration of filial admiration for demonstrating that moral bearings need not be forfeited in war. Lieut. William Fisk apparently refused to lead a firing squad charged with executing an Australian soldier for desertion and murder; the elder Fisk would have recognized a kindred spirit in Staff Sergeant Nolde, no doubt.

A few other heroes appear at the most unexpected moments—a Muslim cleric who rescued the author from a potentially fatal beating in Afghanistan comes to mind—but *The Great War for Civilisation* does not offer many feel-good endings. Fisk's often powerful reportage is steeped in a rich appreciation of history, but the book is not chronologically tidy, nor does it advance a sustained argument to guide the reader through a vast body of work that represents thirty years of distinctively tenacious, often brave journalism. I must admit that while reading this massive, unruly book I imagined Fisk emptying all his drawers on the bed. The book would have benefited greatly from a strong-willed editor. It is not just that the prose is sometimes flabby but that anecdotes and jabs are recycled, sometimes within the same chapter. Perhaps the editors at Knopf believe that Fisk is so important to Middle East journalism—or so revered by his readers—that every nail clipping and bon mot needs to be preserved. If so, they missed a chance to offer an even more compelling, less daunting volume, especially for readers with a newly acquired curiosity about the Middle East. Even so, this is a significant work that is sure to endure well after the current flood of Middle East–related books has crested.

In Fisk's view, America's wars in the Middle East are part of a continuing 'great war for civilisation.' And the goal is conquest.

In the Middle East, Fisk observes, "the people live their past history, again and again, every day," and for two centuries that history has largely been shaped by outside powers, especially imperial France and Britain, the expansionist Soviet Union and for more than half a century the United States. Certainly, were it not for the etching of borders associated with seminal documents—the 1916 Sykes-Picot Agreement, the 1917 Balfour Declaration, Lord Mountbatten's plan for the partition of British India—the region as we know it would scarcely exist. Yet even to conjure the region absent these decisive great-power intrusions is such a complex exercise in recursion that it serves to demonstrate how deeply implicated others have been in engraving the history of the region. Long after the echoes of Napoleon's cannons firing on the port of Alexandria in 1798 quieted, the profound changes that the invasion launched in Egypt and the wider Arab world reverberated. The deadly effects of "great wars" on the field of battle are clear enough, whether in the mud and slaughter of the Somme or on the hills of Maysaloun, where in 1920 the French vanquished the Arab struggle for an independent Syria. But it was what followed those episodes of mayhem that gave decisive shape to the modern Middle East: the drawing of boundaries, co-optation of local elites, economic subordination and the maneuvering of pieces on geopolitical chessboards. French generals, British diplomats and American missionaries were people with a plan. Their hubris, in Fisk's view, was to impose Western civilization on the people of the Middle East, and their efforts were part of a continuing "great war for civilisation" that has as its goal the conquest of the region.

Fisk sees no good coming from these ceaseless interventions. Indeed, he argues that campaigns in the "war for civilisation" may begin with optimism but typically end in catastrophe—America's invasion of Iraq in March 2003 being a case in point. The invasion was informed not only by a willful contempt for history and an extravagant display of ethnocentrism but also by a framework of best-case scenarios and fantasies untouched by empirical knowledge of Iraq, as the case of the Iraqi Shiites illustrates. If a new Iraq emerges from the current violent stalemate, it will look very little like the exemplary democratic state that Bush or his chorus of war-boosters envisaged. In fact, it is likely to be closer to the Iranian model of "Islamic democracy," provided it does not descend further into civil war. Fisk's cynicism about Anglo-American policy in Iraq is richly borne out by the legacy of deprivation, death and disorder that the invasion, and the preceding decade of sanctions and nibbling attacks by the United States and Britain, have yielded.

In the area around Basra in southern Iraq, to take one of many examples in Fisk's book, there has been a phenomenal epidemic of leukemia, breast and stomach cancer presumably connected to the introduction of an estimated 340 tons of radioactive material into the environment during the 1991 Gulf War. The source of the radioactivity? The profligate use of depleted uranium ammunition by the US military. In areas where the ammunition was fired in great quantities, cancer rates in children are as high as 71.8 per 100,000 compared with a regional average of 3.9 per 100,000. An Iraqi doctor reviewing his patient files tells Fisk, "Of fifteen cancer patients from one area, I have only two left. I am receiving children with cancer of the bone—this is incredible.... My God, I have performed mastectomies on two girls with cancer of the breast—one of them was only fourteen years old." Fisk calls this the product of "a policy of bomb now, die later."

But is Iraq doomed to wallow in misery, or might something good come of this poorly conceived invasion? While there may be no escape from history, Fisk's dour emphasis on history's recurrent patterns risks producing a static picture of the region. In his eagerness to discover historical parallels, he sometimes fails to grasp the novel features of the present. As a result, he offers neither feasible prescriptions nor a persuasive

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analysis of possible outcomes. Even if one shares Fisk's skepticism of US motives in Iraq—and his conviction, echoed by the vast majority of Iraqis, that America's war is ultimately about oil—there is no question that politics in the region have been thrown off kilter by the occupation. The naïve conception of a democratic peace that has preoccupied George Bush—especially since Iraq's WMD larder proved to be empty—is irrelevant, except perhaps as an index of presidential gullibility, but after years of political stagnation there has clearly been a step-level change in the region.

Whether the outcome of the US-led invasion of Iraq will be constructive political turmoil leading to serious reform in obdurate autocracies, such as Egypt, Syria and Tunisia, or more horrific bloodshed and instability as Iraq plunges further into civil war, is a pertinent—and still unanswered—question. Although I opposed the invasion, my sense is that the political terms of reference have changed dramatically, if only because the United States and other Western states have been forced to acknowledge that the Islamist parties are the major opposition force in the region. Fanciful presumptions about secular oppositionists have been shelved, at least for now. As the recent elections in both Iraq and Egypt reveal, the Islamist parties will be an indelible component in whatever new equilibrium emerges in the region's political systems. Oddly, for all that Fisk has to say about the errors, deceptions and missteps of US policy, he sheds scant light on the possible future of regional politics, other than showing how America's policies have been a boon to followers of Osama bin Laden. Given his long years in the Middle East, it is surprising that his book lacks a serious assessment of how the region might be affected by America's Iraq adventure.

Then again, Fisk is not offering a volume of prognostication but a work of memory. And if there is one clear lesson of this book, it is that while wars, crusades and terror may erase people, memories and the quest for retributive justice are not so easily extinguished. In his reporting on the region's wars, Fisk has waged a campaign against forgetting and deliberate amnesia.

Fisk arrived in Beirut in 1976, at the age of 29, to report on the year-old civil war. Thirty years later, he is still there. While some of his contemporaries, notably John Bulloch, Kamal Salibi, Jonathan Randal, Ehud Ya'ari and Ze'ev Schiff have produced important accounts of major phases of the Lebanon conflicts, no journalist, or scholar for that matter, can match the breadth, nuance or tenacity of Fisk's meticulous history of Lebanon's fifteen-year civil war, *Pity the Nation*. Fisk was one of the first reporters to enter Sabra and Shatila, the Beirut camps where, in September 1982, as many as 1,000 Palestinian refugees and displaced Lebanese Muslims were massacred at the hands of Christian militiamen allied with Israel. The atrocities that occurred in the camps left a deep imprint on Fisk's psyche, and he has often recalled those gruesome scenes, emphasizing the integral role that Israeli officials, including then–Defense Minister Ariel Sharon, played in permitting the killings as well as in the subsequent disappearance of as many as 1,800 Arab, mostly Palestinian, male prisoners, who were turned over to the Christian Phalange. Most have never been seen again. On September 11, 2001, Fisk was on a flight to the United States, and he was putting the final touches on a story revisiting the 1982 massacres.

Graphically violent, Fisk's writing forces us to gaze upon disemboweled corpses, decimated families and the anguish of war's victims.

His eventful career spans two Israeli invasions, the rise and fall of Syrian suzerainty in Lebanon, the eight-year war launched when Iraq invaded Iran in 1980, the defeat of the Soviet army in Afghanistan, the Algerian civil war, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Iraq's invasion of Kuwait and, of course, September 11 and its aftermath. During the civil war in Algeria, which erupted in 1992 after the army canceled elections the Islamists were poised to win, Fisk was one of the few reporters writing for an English-language paper to report from the ravaged former French colony, where perhaps 200,000 died at the hands of government forces or Islamist insurgents. His seventy-page chapter encompassing Algeria's victorious revolution to break free of Paris, the accelerating decay of the authoritarian single-party state that emerged in 1962 and the calamitous civil war that raged for most of the 1990s could easily be a fine stand-alone essay on a society nearly eviscerated by violence.

Fisk's writing has always been notable for its graphic depictions of violence. He jerks our heads and forces us to gaze upon disemboweled corpses, decimated families and the anguish of war's victims, as if he wanted to infuse our nostrils with the secondhand stench of death. He has no patience for the Gameboy euphemisms—target-rich environments, collateral damage, surgical strikes—so favored by cable news coverage of America's wars.

Although it is not his intention, Fisk's parade of dreadfully suffering victims can lead to a kind of numbing war porn. "Please stop," I found myself muttering, "you've made your point." He notes that "war is also a vicarious, painful, attractive, unique experience for a journalist. Somehow that narcotic has to be burned off. If it's not, the journalist may well die." Perhaps Fisk is himself addicted to war. I suspect that he needs to feed the habit.

He writes wearing a hair-shirt of empathy for the victims of oppression, never more notoriously than when, in 2001, he was nearly murdered by angry Afghans in a war-ravaged village on the border with Pakistan. "If I were an Afghan refugee," Fisk wrote from his hospital bed, "I would have attacked Robert Fisk. Or any other Westerner I could find." His adversaries had a field day of schadenfreude. The *Wall Street Journal* editorialized that he had finally gotten "his due," suggesting that his defense of the attackers was tantamount to absolving mass murderers, particularly the nineteen perpetrators of the September 11 terrorist attacks, of their crimes. Fisk has done nothing of the sort, in fact, and he makes no secret of his loathing of the terrorists responsible for the attacks. But he insists on providing a context for Al Qaeda's atrocities, something that infuriates many people who prefer the convenient simplicity of a black-and-white world. He had the effrontery to suggest that US policy, including its skewed stance on the Arab-Israeli conflict, has something to do with the enmity and distrust that America faces not just in the Middle East but in much of the world:

> No, Israel was not to blame for what happened on September 11th, 2001. The culprits were Arabs, not Israelis. But America's failure to act with honour in the Middle East, its promiscuous sale of missiles to those [i.e., the IDF in particular] who use them against civilians, its blithe disregard for the deaths of tens of thousands of Iraqi children under sanctions of which Washington was the principal supporter—all these were intimately related to the society that produced the Arabs who plunged New York into an apocalypse of fire.

Fisk's trenchant criticism of US Middle East policy has doubtless opened doors

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for him in the region (Osama bin Laden, for one, has praised his objectivity), but it also raises suspicion in the West, especially in the United States. Fisk does not help his case with his often strident prose and intemperate criticism, not to mention the egocentrism that runs through much of his reporting. There is a clear line between acceptable criticism and irresponsible insinuation, and Fisk sometimes crosses it. Consider, for example, his gloss on the bedlam and looting that marked the first days of the occupation of Baghdad, when Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld quipped that "stuff happens," evidently unaware of the occupier's responsibilities under international law. That there was no serious effort to bring the looting to a halt for days—even as the oil ministry was protected by American troops—reflects a level of strategic stupidity that has haunted the United States in Iraq ever since. This is fair game for tough reporting by Fisk and others. Fisk goes on, however, to hint that the looters were organized by some dark force—not Saddam's deposed regime but Iraqis presumably allied with the United States. He asks the conspiracy theorist's "who benefits" question: In whose interest is it for Iraq to be deconstructed, divided, burned, de-historied, destroyed? Like many people in the region that has been his home for the past three decades, Fisk seems to think the United States is capable of anything—anything, that is, except incompetence.

Yet for Americans fed a bland diet of government-manipulated news about the Middle East, *The Great War for Civilisation* should be a bracing, troubling book. American journalism does not come off well, although Fisk doffs his cap to several veteran reporters, including John Kifner of the *New York Times* and the late Peter Jennings. During the 1991 Gulf War, he writes, journalists became "mere cyphers, mouthpieces of generals, discreetly avoiding any moral questions, switching off their cameras—as we would later witness—when the horrors of war became too obvious. Journalists connived in the war, supported it, became part of it. Immaturity, inexperience, upbringing: you can choose any excuse you want. But they created war without death. They lied." (Fisk has never been accused of mincing words.) The ease with which the mainstream media became accomplices to the White House in the rush to war in Iraq less than three years ago suggests that Fisk's charges apply with equal force today.

The *New York Times* comes in for particularly tough criticism in Fisk's book. He accuses the *Times* of being gutless for its elliptical coverage of Iraq's use of chemical weapons in the Iran–Iraq War (1980–88). Fisk was one of the few Western journalists who reported from both the Iranian and Iraqi fronts during the war, and he wrote of Saddam's use of gas several years before Iraq's defiance of Washington made it politically acceptable to do so in the paper of record. His description of riding on a troop train returning casualties from the front is a rejoinder to the Gray Lady's doubts (at the time) about the Iraqi use of gas:

> Then I pull open the connecting door of the next carriage and they are sitting in there by the dozen, the young soldiers and Revolutionary Guards of the Islamic Republic, coughing softly into tissues and gauze cloths. Some are in open carriages, others crammed into compartments, all slowly dribbling blood and mucus from their mouths and noses.

Times columnist Thomas Friedman, described as "messianic" and featured for certitudes with short half-lives, might wonder what Fisk would write about him were he not a "friend" from their days in Lebanon during the civil war, when Friedman made a name for himself as a fine, honest war reporter. Policy experts are not spared either, including the Brookings Institution's Kenneth Pollack, who is assailed for his "most meretricious" book *The Threatening Storm*, which convinced many liberal intellectuals to endorse the Iraq War. As Fisk notes, the book was no less flawed and biased in its blinkered assumptions than the Bush Administration's self-deceptive paradigm of Iraq.

But in decrying the timorousness of intellectuals, he makes his own no less bold claims to special knowledge, if not truth, grounded in appreciation of history's lessons in the Middle East. One of those lessons is that foreign intervention typically leads to catastrophe, particularly for the region's residents and often for the intervening state. There is precedent for the claim, including Lebanon in the early 1980s and Iran in the 1970s. Yet reading *The Great War for Civilisation* the credulous reader would imagine that the US invasion of Afghanistan was wholly unpopular with the Afghans. In fact, the toppling of the Taliban, while not universally applauded, was welcomed by many, many Afghans. He even wrote in 2003 that the American mission in the country was "collapsing," which reveals that Fisk may sometimes be as blinkered as those he derides.

Fisk also has an unfortunate weakness for lazy harangues, as in his evocation of the buildup to the war against Saddam Hussein:

> This war, about oil and regional control, was being cheer-led by a president who was treacherously telling us that this was part of an eternal war against "terror." The British and most Europeans didn't believe him. It's not that Britons wouldn't fight for America. They just didn't want to fight for Bush or his friends. And if that included the prime minister, they didn't want to fight for Blair either. Still less did they wish to embark on endless wars with a Texas governor-executioner who dodged the Vietnam draft and who, with his oil buddies, was now sending America's poor to destroy a Muslim nation that had nothing at all to do with the crimes against humanity of 11 September 2001.

Fisk is at his best when he gets off his soapbox and concentrates on his strengths: telling the stories of history's victims and exposing the lies of the powerful. Some of the most impressive writing in *The Great War for Civilisation*, which ranges across a century of regional conflict, explores events that took place decades before the author's birth, notably the Armenian genocide of 1915, the subject of a chapter titled "The First Holocaust." Fisk's prodigious skills as a narrator are on vivid display in his moving account of Armenians marching off to death, based on interviews he conducted with survivors living their last days in a home for the blind in Beirut. "The First Holocaust" will make it more difficult for Turkey and its well-placed friends (among them Princeton historian Bernard Lewis, a favored guest at the Vice Presidential mansion) to sustain its campaign of denial.

The Great War for Civilisation is also peopled with extraordinary characters, whom Fisk wisely allows to speak for themselves in all their fascinating—and disconcerting—dissonance. When he meets Mikhail Kalashnikov at an international arms fair in Abu Dhabi, the inventor of the eponymous rifle assures him that good prevails in the end and that "the time will come when my weapons will be no more used or necessary." (Needless to say, Fisk does not share his optimism.) And there are indelible scenes, notably an interview in Iran's Qasr prison with Sadeq Khalkhali, the infamous cleric who summarily dispatched many functionaries of the Shah's regime to the firing squad. While offering a religious defense of stoning, Khalkhali attacks a tub of ice cream, digging "his little spoon into the

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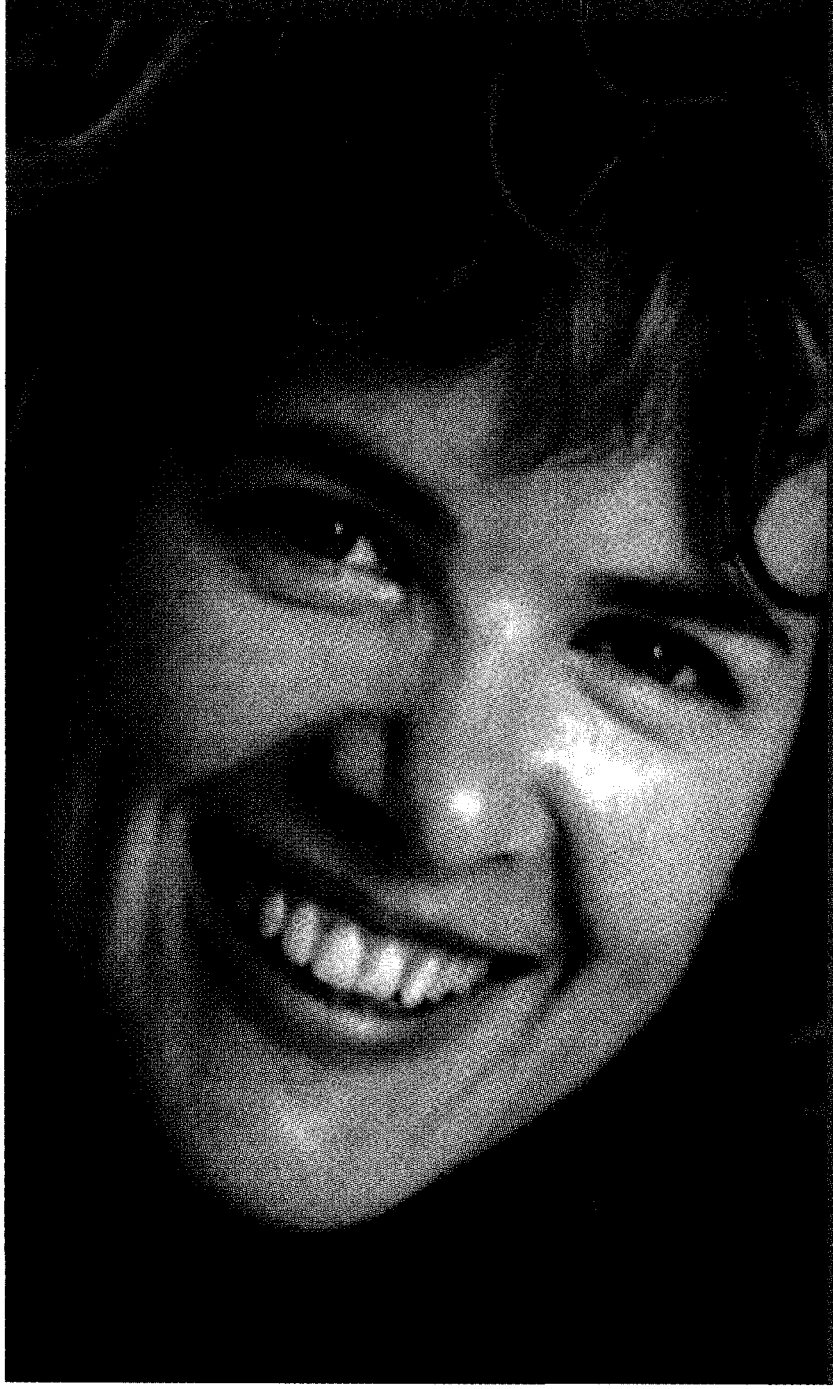
Nation

with Laura Flanders



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melting white ice-cream, oblivious to the bare-headed prisoners who trudged past behind him, heaving barrels loaded with cauldrons of vegetable soup." Not far away women in chadors, clutching children, seek the release of their imprisoned husbands, but the smiling Khalkhali pays them no mind.

Fisk is sometimes rather too eager for the spotlight, making himself a character in the dramas he reports. Writing of the assassination of Ayatollah Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr, a leading Iraqi Shiite cleric, he says, "Only when I asked to visit Najaf in [July] 1980 did a Baath Party official tell the truth." But my recollection (I was then in Lebanon) was that months before his "scoop" there was no lack of knowledge about the savage killing of the revered cleric in Abu Ghraib prison. Sadr died as nails were driven into his head, after he was forced to watch the abuse and then execution of his sister, Bint Huda. Still, Fisk has captured many a scoop during his long and distinguished career, from his reporting on Sabra and Shatila to his revelations that the Iranian passenger jet blasted out of the air in 1988 by the USS Vincennes was identified by other American naval vessels as a civilian plane on a routine, scheduled flight, contrary to official US claims at the time.

What is more, he has been especially fearless in uncovering official deception, as in his reporting on Israel's siege of the West Bank in 2002, when Palestinian residences and government offices were ransacked, pillaged and smeared with feces. Israel tried futilely to dismiss reports as "baseless incitement whipped up by the Palestinian Authority," but the stories by Fisk and others proved otherwise. He contrasts American journalists "who report in so craven a fashion from the Middle East—so fearful of Israeli criticism that they turn Israeli murder into 'targeted attacks' and illegal settlements into 'Jewish neighborhoods'" with their Israeli colleagues, notably *Ha'aretz*'s Ramallah correspondent Amira Hass, who abjures pablum and writes with deep moral insight about Israelis and Palestinians.

Although he is often vilified by Israel's friends for his criticisms of the Jewish state, Fisk is no less scathing about the late Yasir Arafat and other Arab and Muslim politicians and despots, many of whom, he notes, have benefited from the self-interested patronage of the powerful, including the United States. After the Oslo Accords were signed in 1993, the United States and Israel were content to allow Arafat to establish himself as a petty autocrat, one of a number of aspects of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that Fisk treats in a fifty-page chapter and at various other points in his book. A different choice might have been made by insisting on building democratic political structures in Palestine. Instead, there was a myopic focus on Israeli "security," with Arafat cast as Israel's gendarme in Palestine. In 1994 I asked Yossi Beilin at a private meeting in Boston whether a peace built between societies would be more durable than one made by forging a deal with Arafat and his cronies. Beilin was then Deputy Foreign Minister in the government of Yitzhak Rabin, and he was a key architect of the Oslo "peace process." He replied impatiently: "The Palestinian state is going to be a dictatorship just like all the other Arab states." As Fisk notes, neither the Israelis nor the Americans objected to Arafat's allergy to democracy until the outbreak of the second intifada, when the call for Palestinian political reform became a virtual mantra in Washington and Tel Aviv:

> Far from condemning the ever-increasing signs of despotism on the other side of their border, the Israelis lavished only praise on Arafat's new security measures. U.S. State Department spokesmen, while making routine reference to their "concern" for human rights, welcomed and congratulated Arafat on the vitality of his secret midnight courts—a fact bitterly condemned by Amnesty International. Equally secret meetings of Arafat's inner cabinet, which led to mass arrests of political opponents, were ignored by the U.S. administration.

After the assassination of Rabin in 1995, the Clinton Administration pursued an anemic policy vis-à-vis the new Likud government of Benjamin Netanyahu. Clinton privately characterized Netanyahu as unable to "recognize the humanity of the Palestinians," but the Israeli prime minister was permitted to undermine the very peace process Clinton had welcomed with ceremony and fanfare on the White House lawn in 1993.

Only in his last six months in office did Clinton get out front on peacemaking, first through an enormous effort at the Camp David summit in the summer of 2000 and then at Taba in the Sinai. Arafat was unfairly condemned by Clinton for sabotaging the effort because he would not accept then–Prime Minister Ehud Barak's take-it-or-leave-it offer. Even so, in the final months of the Clinton Administration the Palestinians and Israelis came close to nailing down the details of an agreement, but the new Israeli Prime Minister, Ariel Sharon, was uninterested in a deal that would jeopardize his beloved West Bank settlements. The new American President, George W. Bush, espoused no interest in Middle East peacemaking and certainly did not want sloppy seconds to the despised Clinton. In any case, Bush's fixation was Iraq.

By the time Arafat died, in 2004—unmourned by Washington, hounded and surrounded by Sharon—he had long since become the villain, the sole "obstacle to peace." Then Israel departed forlorn Gaza, and in return "vast areas of the Palestinian West Bank would now become Israeli, courtesy of President Bush." With characteristic sarcasm, Fisk wonders about Bush: "Does he actually *work* for al-Qaeda?"

Few reporters in the West have gotten as close to the leader of Al Qaeda as Fisk, who landed two meetings with Osama bin Laden: the first in Khartoum in 1993, the second in Afghanistan in 1996. His accounts of the meetings are valuable for revealing bin Laden's concern for the fate of the Palestinians, which is often glossed as opportunistic by Western observers, as well as his contemplative demeanor and his confidence that "sooner or later the Americans will leave Saudi Arabia" and that "the war declared by America against the Saudi people means war against all Muslims everywhere." "Resistance against America will spread in many, many places in Muslim countries," he tells Fisk. Later, in February 2003, as the United States was poised to invade Iraq, bin Laden seized the opportunity to mobilize Muslims against the invaders and grasped the need to put aside his differences with secular Muslims opposed to America's presence in Iraq: "Despite our belief and our proclamation concerning the infidelity of socialists [i.e., Baathists], in present-day circumstances there is a coincidence of interests between Muslims and socialists in their battles against the Crusaders." This was bin Laden's call to arms in Iraq.

Yet Fisk fails to put bin Laden in context. Considering the many years that he has lived in and reported from the Middle East—and the formidable heft of his book—it's striking that he has not provided readers with a richer sense of the weave and texture of Muslim societies, where bin Laden's pursuit of cataclysm is widely abhorred and rejected, even as it inspires worrying numbers of jihadists to join the battle. Indeed, by the end of *The Great War for Civilisation* the reader is left with

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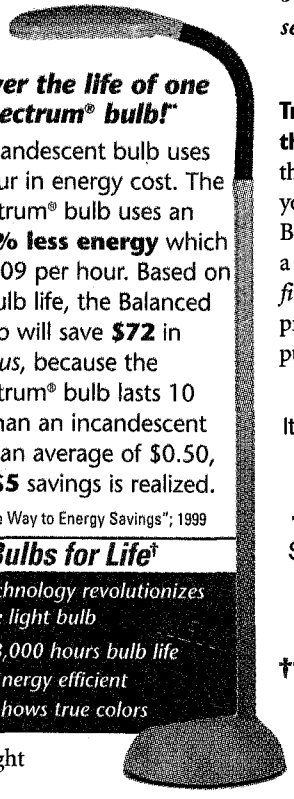

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an extraordinary Hieronymus Bosch regional mural in mind. It is fascinating to gaze upon, often grotesque, but also quite incomplete. Not only does Fisk risk reducing complex societies to war zones, in a kind of anti-imperialist version of Orientalism; he also risks suggesting that most of the tensions and conflicts in the region, including the struggle over the meaning of Islam and Islamist politics, are simply a reaction to Western interference. The rise of the Arab Shiites, for example, has arguably more to do with local politics (and intra-Muslim struggles) than international relations—although nothing is merely local anymore. Fisk has an "externalist" view of the region, despite having lived there for decades. And one hardly gets a flavor of the various cultures within it. This is a systematic shortcoming of the book, which presents the Middle East as a cockpit of bloodshed and sorrow, not as a place where people face mundane challenges that ultimately must be addressed peacefully.

The Great War for Civilisation is 1,000-plus pages of history with attitude. It is not an impartial reading of contemporary Middle East history, but it is generally clear-eyed and consistently unflinching. The book seals Robert Fisk's place as a venerable, indispensable contributor to informed debate in and about the Middle East. If there are no realistic remedies on offer, there is generous informed criticism and a storehouse of rare detail and erudite reportage that serve as testimony to an exceptional career, one that is unmatched in its sustained intensity, moral introspection and courage. Lieut. William Fisk would be proud. ■

Just Us

DAVID OSHINSKY

REFORGING THE WHITE REPUBLIC: Race, Religion and American Nationalism, 1865–1898. By Edward J. Blum. Louisiana. 356 pp. $54.95.

WORKING TOWARD WHITENESS: How America's Immigrants Became White—The Strange Journey From Ellis Island to the Suburbs. By David R. Roediger. Basic. 339 pp. $26.95.

WHEN AFFIRMATIVE ACTION WAS WHITE: An Untold History of Racial Inequality in Twentieth-Century America. By Ira Katznelson. Norton. 238 pp. $25.95.

"The history of the world," W.E.B. Du Bois wrote in 1897, "is the history, not of individuals, but of groups, not of nations, but of races, and he who ignores or seeks to override the race idea in human history ignores and overrides the central thought of all history." More than 100 years later, these words still resonate. While few scholars today would feel comfortable endorsing a single idea as the key to "all history," most have been trained to view concepts like racism and racial identity as essential to a full understanding of a society's cultural DNA. Three new books by Edward Blum, David Roediger and Ira Katznelson are part of a flourishing cottage industry in academia, examining, as Du Bois did, the enormous impact of race on American history.

Like most scholars of race relations in the late nineteenth century, Blum views the era of Reconstruction, stretching from the Confederate surrender at Appomattox in 1865 to the departure of Northern troops from Southern soil in 1877, as a time of tremendous optimism, and ultimate tragedy, for the nation's freed people. Change was in the air. Radical abolitionists were recognized for their foresight in opposing slavery, while black fighting men were hailed for their courage under fire. The Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments guaranteed African-Americans full citizenship, at least on paper. Indeed, it was Southern whites who stood apart from the national mainstream—their "outsider" status heightened by a galling refusal to blame themselves for the bloodshed or to punish those who had caused it.

Over time, however, the Northern urge to reform the South fell victim to political squabbling in Washington, a nationwide economic depression and endless violence against blacks who tried to exercise their newfound constitutional rights. Some historians believe that a more gradual Reconstruction, one that pursued less radical goals, might have succeeded. Others disagree, contending that the North's commitment to civil rights was never strong enough to combat the fierce resistance of Southern whites to even the most modest gains by their former slaves. Either way, the advances of Reconstruction were quickly reversed, leaving Southern blacks powerless and segregated, unable to vote or to seek protection under the law.

Where does Blum stand? In his view, the pursuit of racial justice was swamped by an idyllic vision of national healing, based on restoring the white racial unity that had been torn asunder by the war. And those most responsible for this vision, he contends, were Northern Protestant ministers, evangelists and reformers who used their pulpits, revival tents and social crusades to "reforge" the broken white Republic. Whiteness soon became the national identity, white supremacy the national faith.

His examples are compelling. Most of us remember Harriet Beecher Stowe and her brother, the minister Henry Ward Beecher, as fiery abolitionists who mobilized Northern opposition to slavery. (Lincoln famously referred to Stowe, the author of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, as "the little lady who started the big war.") But few of us, I suspect, are aware that Beecher spent his later years preaching "mercy" and "magnanimity" toward the defeated South in terms that would have made Margaret Mitchell blush, or that Stowe, who purchased a winter home in Florida, ended up spinning the virtues of Southern society to a generation of gullible Northern tourists. For her, writes Blum, "a new and ideal United States would be one in which northern and southern whites ruled benevolently and former slaves worked cheerfully in a naturally subservient status."

They weren't alone. Blum wonderfully includes Dwight Lyman Moody, a Massachusetts-born shoe salesman-turned-evangelist whose massive tent revivals, peppered with calls for sectional healing and racial segregation, swept the nation in the 1870s, spreading the belief, Blum notes, "that God desired peace among whites far more than justice for all citizens." And Francis Willard, crusading president of the Women's Christian Temperance Union, described her campaign as "the new abolition war, in which Northern and Southern bayonets point the same way." Like Stowe, Beecher and Moody, the Northern-born Willard beseeched the Lord to heal the

David Oshinsky, George Littlefield Professor of American History at UT-Austin, is the author of many books, including Worse Than Slavery: Parchman Farm and the Ordeal of Jim Crow Justice *and, most recently,* A Conspiracy So Immense: The World of Joe McCarthy.

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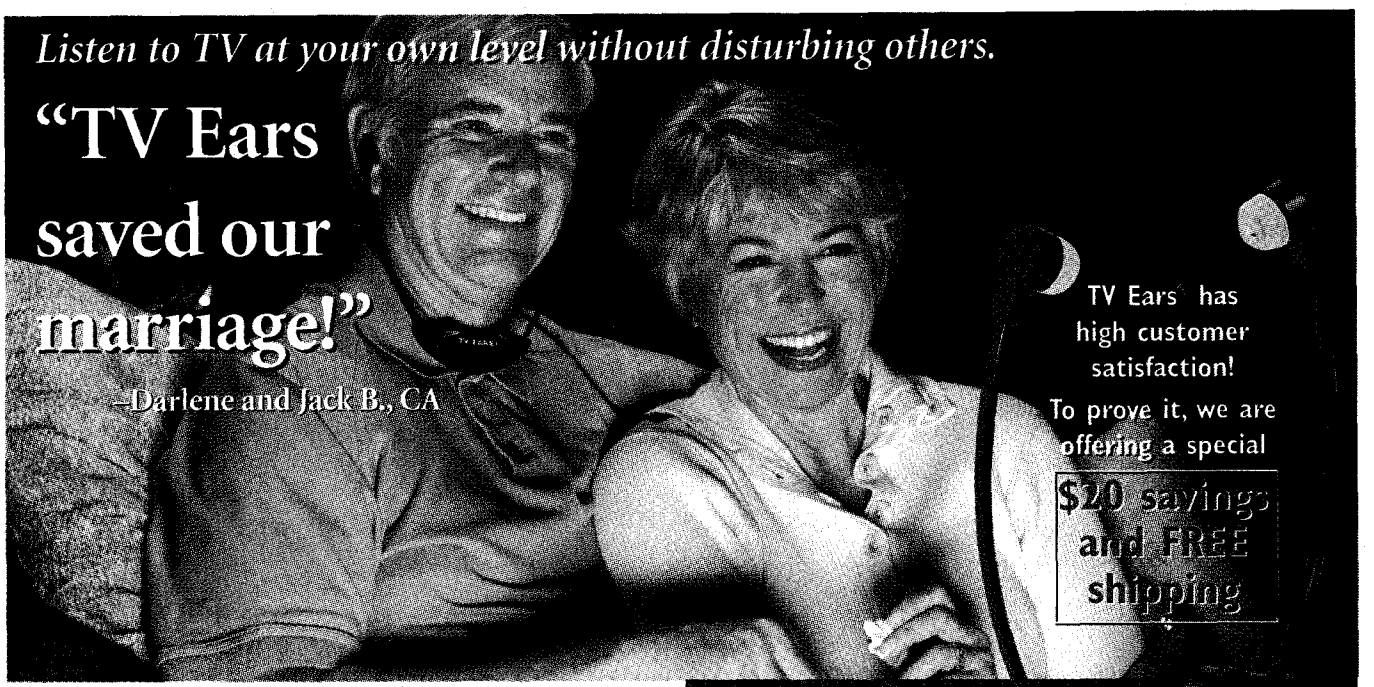

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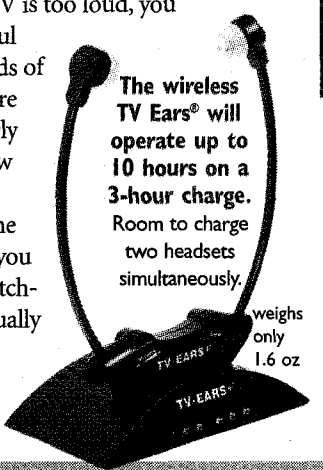

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wounds inflicted upon white America by the Civil War. She, too, constructed a vision of white Southern goodness that ignored the realities of racial oppression.

Reforging the White Republic won the Southern Historical Association's C. Vann Woodward Prize in 2004 for the best dissertation in Southern history. Like many newcomers seeking a niche, Blum is not averse to self-congratulation. "This book offers a completely new perspective on sectional relations and racial ideologies after the Civil War," he writes in his introduction, noting a page later, for those who may have missed it, that his work "not only offers a new window into reconciliation and Reconstruction, but also challenges the bedrock assumption of nearly a century of religious historiography on the postbellum years."

Well, not exactly. What Blum has done, with great skill, is add a new dimension to a familiar story. He reminds us of the enduring power of religion in public discourse—how it was used, in this instance, to bring feuding whites together on the basis of race. It's a sad lesson, well worth remembering.

David Roediger's *Working Toward Whiteness* is a more complex, yet ultimately less satisfying, book. Roediger, a history professor at the University of Illinois, starts his story around 1890, when the first wave of immigrants from Southern and Central Europe began to pour in to the United States. He shows that their assimilation into American society was a long, difficult process, meaning that a Jew or an Italian, for example, was not perceived to be, in historian Thomas Guglielmos's words, "white on arrival." Yet Roediger makes it clear that the obstacles encountered by these immigrants must never be compared with the oppression and exclusion suffered by those of African, Latino, Asian, or American Indian ancestry. Indeed, he argues, the incremental inclusion of the first group was shaped by the continued exclusion of the other.

For Roediger the huddled masses who swarmed through the gates of newly opened Ellis Island were in a kind of racial limbo—their status somewhere between that of a white American and a person of color. They were the "kikes" and "hunkies" and "greasers" whose odd-sounding dialects, alien cultural beliefs and assorted biological "weaknesses" made them dubious candidates for racial assimilation. With a keen eye for historical irony, Roediger sees the National Origins Act of 1924, the most restrictive piece of anti-immigrant legislation in our history, as a prime factor in moving this process forward. Strict quotas on immigration meant that Americans no longer had to worry about being overwhelmed. The trickle of newcomers after 1924 made European immigrants seem far less threatening. America would now transform the foreigner, rather than the reverse. Immigrants, at last, had become "digestible."

The following decades completed this process. The two keys, Roediger says, were the rise of industrial labor unions, which provided white immigrants with economic and political clout, and new federal housing policies that encouraged them to reside in segregated neighborhoods—a process he describes as "perhaps the clearest example of the New Deal's 'whitening' reforms." The suburban house became "an important (white) American symbol," he adds, "and the subsidized suburban home owner the quintessential social citizen."

In the 1930s and '40s, affirmative action was white, explicitly designed to benefit white men while keeping black people in their place.

Roediger makes a strong case here. There is a vast gap between the despised, racially suspect immigrant of the 1890s and the proud white ethnic American we celebrate today. And bridging that gap required a whitening process that historians have often overlooked. The problem, however, is that most of Roediger's immigrants are pawns in this drama, controlled by powerful forces—employers, politicians, union bosses, policymakers—who manipulate them in ways designed to strengthen white nationalism and weaken racial reform. How these immigrants came to their own opinions about race and class, without reward or coercion, is less important to Roediger than demonstrating how such views were forced upon them. In his version, the immigrant is more a bystander than a participant.

This is not an easy book to read. Though Roediger thanks a dozen research assistants and numerous others for "expertly prepar[ing] the manuscript for submission," the end result is cluttered, jargon-filled and confusing. A typical paragraph goes on for pages. Each is chock-full with six, eight, ten examples of a single theme, a virtual bombardment of redundant information. I can't recall an author quite as devoted as Roediger to citing the work of so many colleagues—all positively—in the text itself. These include: "Anne McClintock's challenging work on cleanliness," "Michael Rogin's exciting work on blackface in film," "Ewa Morawska's excellent quantitative study of Johnstown, Pennsylvania," "Janice Okoomian's fine studies of Armenian American women immigrants" and several hundred more. Identical phrases pop up with numbing regularity, leaving the impression that the book's harassed editor simply threw in the towel. In the end, Roediger's often shrewd insights are obscured by his vacuum-cleaner approach to history.

This is not the case with *When Affirmative Action Was White*, a gem of a book that favors brevity and precision. Ira Katznelson, a political scientist and historian at Columbia, understands the dilemma he faces. Opponents of affirmative action have captured the moral high ground by lining up to defend America's most fundamental right: equal protection under the law. Meanwhile, those on his side have responded with puffy declarations about righting the wrongs of the past and encouraging "diversity" in the workplace or the classroom. What is needed, says Katznelson, is a better argument—a way to show white Americans that a direct relationship does exist between the recipient of affirmative action and the harm that is being remedied. And that's where history comes into play.

Katznelson owes a large debt to other recent studies, particularly Lizabeth Cohen's superb synthesis of citizenship and prosperity, *A Consumers' Republic*. He begins with Lyndon Johnson's magisterial address at Howard University in 1965. "You do not take a person who, for years, has been hobbled by chains and liberate him, bring him up to the starting line of a race and then say, 'You are free to compete with all the others,' and still justly believe that you have been completely fair," the President declared, adding: "We seek not just freedom but opportunity.... not just equality as a right and a theory but equality as a fact and equality as a result." By then, Johnson was a devoted advocate of civil rights. Since this was not always the case, Katznelson uses LBJ's remarkable transformation to show how Southern politicians helped craft social welfare legislation to benefit white men in particular, while insuring the continued subordination of blacks. The key decades were the 1930s and '40s—the era "when affirmative action was white."

Coming from the (then) one-party Democratic South, Congressmen like Johnson could dominate Capitol Hill by virtue of their seniority and use of the filibuster. Determined to preserve the "Southern way of life" (i.e., segregation and white supremacy), they used their leverage to threaten

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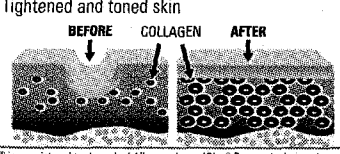

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anyone bold enough to press for civil rights. "They will block every bill I need to keep America from collapsing," a reticent Franklin Roosevelt admitted. "I just can't take that risk."

As Katznelson notes, it was Southern Democrats who helped craft the Social Security Act and the Servicemen's Readjustment Act (commonly known as the GI Bill). Though "colorblind" in language, these laws selectively excluded blacks from reaping the economic rewards they offered. The Social Security Act, for example, did not apply to predominantly black occupations in the South, such as domestic service and farm labor; worse, the eligibility requirements for unemployment insurance and Aid to Dependent Children rested with the states, leaving local white bureaucrats in control.

The GI Bill had a similar effect. While spectacularly successful in elevating white veterans into the burgeoning middle class, it did far less for black veterans, nearly all of whom had spent World War II in segregated units and most of whom had returned to the South, where their day-to-day lives did not seem much improved by the victory over Nazism. Southern blacks had a hard time using their education benefits because the vast majority of colleges in the region would not accept them as students. (Only 5 percent of the black colleges were formally accredited, says Katznelson, and not one "had a doctoral program or a certified engineering program.") In addition, black veterans found it tougher to get a loan or a mortgage, or to find a realtor who would sell them a house. For black veterans, the GI Bill was certainly better than nothing. Yet as Katznelson makes clear, "the differential treatment meted out to [them]...significantly widened the country's large racial gap." Like Social Security, it mixed unprecedented largesse with devastating inequality. And there, says Katznelson, rests the specific racial harm to be remedied today.

How to achieve this is another matter. At the end of his book, Katznelson suggests a plan to "extend affirmative action in order to end it within one generation." Equitable in theory, at least, it calls upon the government to find and compensate those (and their heirs) who were excluded from the federal entitlement programs of the 1930s and '40s. In practice, however, it's hard to imagine how such a plan could be run without a massive bureaucracy, endless cries of corruption and a mountain of racial ill will. For one thing, the number of people likely to identify themselves as the wounded heirs of domestic servants or farm workers or others denied a federal benefit would make a mockery, I suspect, of Katznelson's "closely targeted program of corrective justice." For another, history has shown that such programs, while often described as "transient," "temporary" and "provisional," inevitably take on a momentum of their own. In supporting the landmark *Bakke* decision, which allowed race to be used as a factor in determining admission to medical school, Justice Harry Blackmun noted: "The United States must and will reach a stage of maturity where action along this line is no longer necessary." He wrote these words in 1978.

The great value of Katznelson's book, then, lies in the specific and devastating patterns of discrimination it has uncovered, not in the remedies it provides to combat them. In large measure, Katznelson has done what he set out to do: sharpen the discourse surrounding affirmative action by showing how the most cherished social welfare legislation in American history dramatically increased the economic chasm between blacks and whites. Future debates on this subject should be a lot more substantive as a result.

Unlike so many issues that grab our attention and fade quickly from view, racial inequality remains stubbornly, painfully, in place. There is neither a quick fix for it nor a consensus about the best way to make it disappear. What is hoped, however, is that white Americans will come to see that the high-minded standard of racial neutrality demanded by current opponents of affirmative action ignores a history of discrimination that became subtler, but no less insidious, in the years following World War II. As Lyndon Johnson said forty years ago: "It is not enough just to open the gates of opportunity. All our citizens must have the ability to walk through those gates." ■

ART

Soul Eyes

ARTHUR C. DANTO

Fra Angelico and the prodigy Masaccio are considered the major artists of their time—the second quarter of the fifteenth century—but their contributions were entirely distinct from each other. Of the two, Masaccio's impact is easier to identify: He more or less laid the foundations for High Renaissance painting. His fresco cycle in the Brancacci Chapel has been described as the "school of Florentine painting" by the formidable sixteenth-century art writer Giorgio Vasari, since everyone who was anyone learned from his example, including Fra Angelico himself. Masaccio was the first to apply to painting the principles of perspective (discovered by the architect Brunelleschi), as well as the first to imbue his figures with roundness through the use of light and shade. It was from Masaccio that Leonardo learned chiaroscuro, the way bodies are defined by light and shadows from a single source of illumination. And everyone learned from Masaccio's compositions how to group figures together in a natural way. When Vasari divided the Renaissance into three periods, he named one after Masaccio.

No period in art is named after Fra Angelico, but his achievement is arguably more profound—albeit more elusive—than Masaccio's. The difference between the two quattrocento masters is essentially the difference between two kinds of illusion. Masaccio discovered how convincingly to make a two-dimensional figure on a flat plane look like a three-dimensional object in real space. Fra Angelico discovered how convincingly to create the illusion of a living figure whose exterior features express an inner spiritual state—the look of love, a state of devotion or one of anguish.

Contrasting the two artists in his great work on aesthetics, Hegel praised Fra Angelico for his invention of what the philosopher called "interiority"—"the investigation of inner coordination, the indwelling meaning of facial expressions." Fra Angelico's work is infused, Hegel writes, "with the fervor of a religious love remote from the world, with a conventual purity of disposition, elevation, and sanctity of soul." He was not called Fra Angelico for nothing. But who would expect an exhibition of works by so pure a spirit, so naïve a faith,

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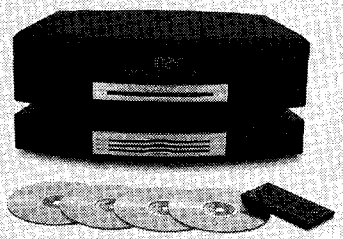

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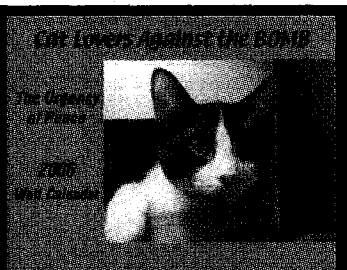

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so innocent a vision to be the hottest show of the season? No one would say that the remarkable exhibition of Fra Angelico at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (through January 29) is likely to be the school for contemporary New York artists. But it is the show to which artists tell me they keep going back.

It was in the depiction of interiority that Hegel believed painting had found its highest vocation, one that, moreover, distinguished the art of the Christian era from that of the classical era, whose defining medium was sculpture. A Greek statue of Aphrodite embodies the idea of erotic love but tells us nothing about what is going on inside her mind. What Hegel describes as "the spiritual depth of feeling, the bliss and grief of the heart" would not have been in the Greek repertory. It would simply have been taken for granted that mothers and their offspring are bonded through love. Christianity demanded that paintings of the Madonna visually depict this love. Thus Hegel contrasts those pictures with an Egyptian image of Isis holding her child, Horus, on her knees:

> In a general way the subject here is the same as it is in Christian pictures of the Madonna: a divine mother with her child. But the difference in the treatment and portrayal of this subject is enormous. In this pose...there is nothing maternal in [Isis], no tenderness, no trait of that soul and feeling which is not entirely missing even in the stiffer Byzantine pictures of the Madonna. What has Raphael, or indeed any other of the great Italian masters not made of the Madonna and the Christ-child! What depth of feeling, what spiritual life, what inner wealth of profound emotion, what sublimity and charm...does not speak to us out of every line of these pictures!

Fra Angelico's masterpiece is the complex of frescoes he produced between 1440 and 1445, in the common spaces and cells of the Dominican convent of San Marco in Florence. As far as I know, Hegel never traveled to Italy. His knowledge of Fra Angelico was in all likelihood based on engravings of some of the more famous San Marco frescoes—*The Annunciation*, say, or *The Coronation of the Virgin*. Yet he must have recognized through these works that however much the Renaissance based itself on classical models, a face like that of the Annunciate Virgin would have been unthinkable in classical representation. The Greek sculptors were well in advance of quattrocento painters in handling human anatomy. The latter excelled in showing through facial expression and body language how a figure like Mary would respond to the astonishing revelation that she would give birth to an incarnate god. She bends forward, holding her hands to her middle, as if protecting the life that is already within while her face shows her contemplating the meaning of her new role. The angel genuflects, acknowledging the difference in their stations. The drama of disclosure is enacted within a loggia, in the execution of which Fra Angelico demonstrates how much he has learned from Masaccio. The perspective is impeccable. The rational order of the architecture contrasts with the cosmic disruption of the historical order. A new era has begun.

Fra Angelico was at the height of his powers in the San Marco frescoes. Several of these wonders appear in beautiful reproductions on the upper level of the show at the Metropolitan. By contrast, many of the works on the lower level of the Lehman Wing are primarily of an art-historical interest. The paintings here merely reflect the gloriousness of Fra Angelico's vision, which comes through even in the reproductions on the upper level. The lower level shows the present state of art-historical scholarship: Several works now attributed to him were once thought to be by different artists. We must take the word of the scholars that these are autographed, or mostly autographed works. Despite their attribution, however, they have very little of the exalted interiority of the San Marco frescoes that so inspired Hegel. The Lehman Wing thus has something of the structure of Plato's allegory of the cave. How, then, did Fra Angelico become the artist whose work is a place of pilgrimage, the man whose name was given to him only after his death in 1455?

Fra Angelico was born Guido di Pietro; he became Fra Giovanni when he entered the Dominican order. In his early paintings, the Renaissance hardly appears to have begun. Paintings like the early *Crucifixion*—which shows a semicircle of Roman cavalrymen and foot soldiers standing at the base of the cross and looking coolly upward as if waiting for Christ to die, while four holy figures in front of the cross support the Virgin, who has fainted—is a powerfully condensed demonstration of Auden's observation about how well the old masters understood the meaning of suffering. But it feels like a Gothic painting, giving no hint that the Renaissance is about to dawn. It is difficult to know how to respond to the Penitent

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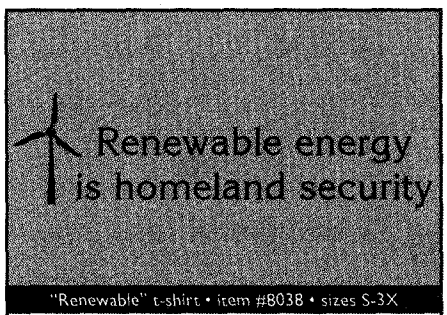

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Saint Jerome, in a panel from Princeton University, since Fra Angelico merely restored parts of it. The small, circular depictions of saints from the predella of an altarpiece said to date from 1417 are exciting only because we now know them to be the work of the young Fra Angelico.

On the other hand, it is difficult not to be touched by *The Nativity*, from the Minneapolis Institute of Art, or the tiny *Virgin and Child With Four Angels*, from the Detroit Institute of Art, whatever their art-historical significance may be. In *The Nativity* Mary and Joseph, as well as the ox and the mule, kneel in adoration of the luminous baby lying on a mat of golden rays. A quintet of angels has settled on the thatched roof, and the gold leaf of the sky conveys the sense of a new kind of dawn. It is a celebration of the divine and at the same time entirely human. In *Virgin and Child* Jesus looks like a fifth angel, and the Virgin's star-spangled mantle looks like a piece of the night sky. Her face displays the dreamy expression one sees on new mothers everywhere. From the perspective of the stone bench she is seated on, and the way the side walls of the manger converge toward a vanishing point, one can tell that the Renaissance has arrived. Space is now naturalistic; these scenes of holiness take place in the same world we live in.

Upon entering the upper level of the Lehman Wing, one faces a greatly enlarged panel from an altarpiece that still remains to be identified. The original can be seen on the lower level, together with several other panels that belonged with it. The catalogue essay devoted to this altarpiece—which tells when it was painted, for what site it was painted, what the subject of the main panels might have been—is a serious piece of scholarly detective work. The panel that has been reproduced and enlarged for the upper level serves another purpose. It helps define precisely at what point Fra Angelico emerged as the master of his period. And it inadvertently provides a test for determining which works belong to the period that made his name. The test: Any work that would be at home in San Marco belongs to Fra Angelico's prime. None of the paintings thus far discussed from the exhibition would pass that test, however engaging they may be. But this painting does pass the test. Any work that can stand up to the great *Annunciation* is Fra Angelico in his prime, if not at his peak.

The painting is called *The Naming of Saint John the Baptist*. An elderly man at the panel's left is seated in a walled gar-

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den, writing with great concentration. He is Zacharias, father of John the Baptist. There are six lovely women, wearing opulent gowns picked out in gold. One of them is Saint Elizabeth, holding the child destined to be John the Baptist, in a very different kind of garment than the shaggy skin in which he is conventionally portrayed. The biblical story partly illustrated by this scene, which viewers in Fra Angelico's time would have known, is that Zacharias has expressed doubts about his son's role, revealed by an angel, and has been struck dumb. His speech is restored when he writes: "John is his name." The little panel has the poetry of Botticelli's *Primavera*—beautiful women, beautifully dressed, are gathered in the open air in a flowered landscape under a blue sky. The work is luminous, and we can see what a remarkable colorist Fra Angelico was, something Hegel could not have gleaned from the engravings. All the panels that allegedly belong with *The Naming of Saint John the Baptist* show the same almost translucent robes. There is something of the Middle Ages in the enclosed garden, carpeted with flowers. But the organization of space, especially in the wall's perspective, implies the innovations of Masaccio and the spirit of the Renaissance. Two great periods in the history of art thus overlap in *The Naming of Saint John the Baptist*.

As, in fact, they do in much of Fra Angelico's work. Consider, for instance, the left panel of his *Last Judgment*, which shows a number of the saved dancing to Paradise in the company of angels. It is a vision of life as fine as could have been imagined. Men, women and angels are dressed exquisitely, their hair done up in elegant coiffures, wearing garlands as well as the nimbuses they deserve as tiaras of sorts, tracing the figure of a courtly dance, tripping across a flower-strewn park, indifferent to the torments of the damned on the facing panel, as they move in rhythmic circles toward eternal bliss. At the top of the panel, figures board a flight of clouds and move into a new and unimaginable state expressed by an expanse of golden emptiness. The physical beauty of the dancers, human or angelic, may be metaphorical, but it is a compelling advertisement for the rewards that await the faithful, and as art it is the high point of this show. As for their expressions, they do not look happy. They look appropriately solemn, perhaps reflecting on the test they have passed in life below, and relieved to have earned the glory they share with the angels. ■

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PUZZLE NO. 3020

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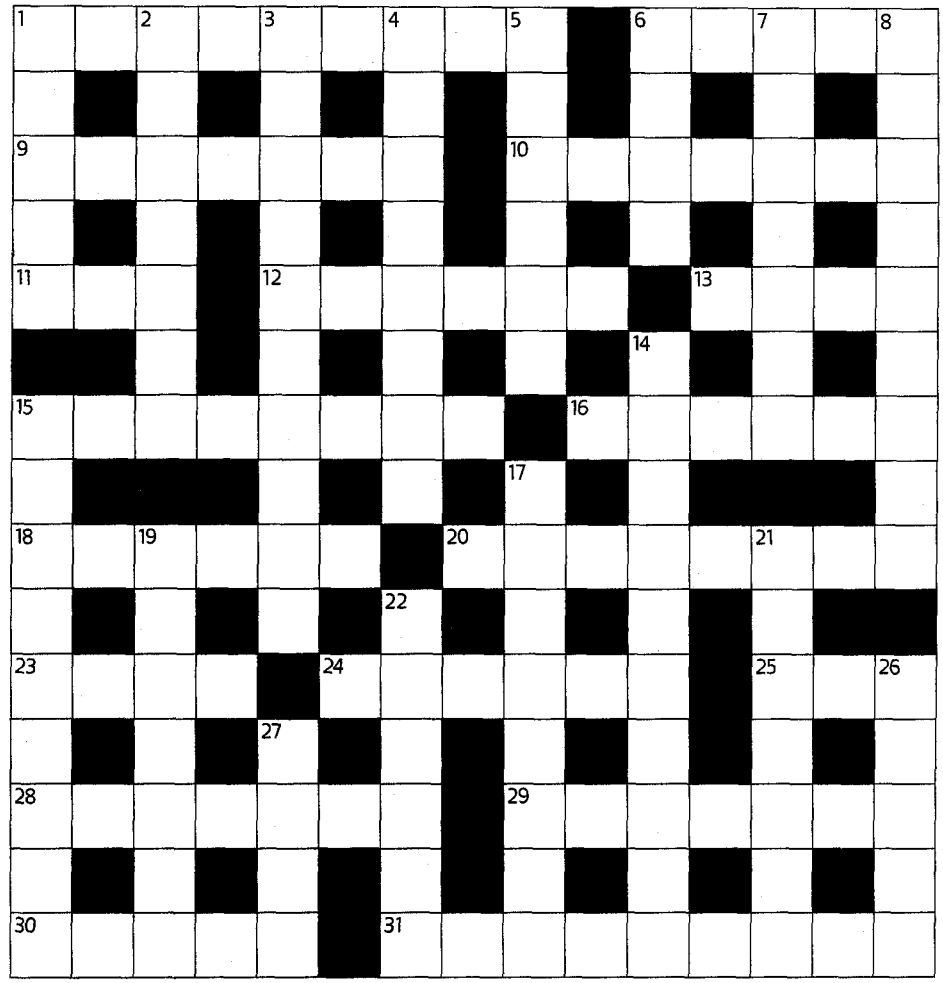

ACROSS

1 Getting together to play the Tehran gig? Perhaps. (9)

6 Twiggy is it? Yes—and sweeping by nature. (5)

9 Men rose confusedly, to discover a transcendental American. (7)

10 How some are sent when told to scram, putting things into boxes. (7)

11, 12 and **13** Were those who made the road for him just gold-bricking? (3,6,2,2)

15 Proving a nuisance when Prince Henry is offered a gin-sling. (8)

16 Small and dainty when taking a plane from Russia, but not in Paris. (6)

18 The Squire is upset by what some might term a bit off-color. (6)

20 Wrecked ships, and what supposedly cause wrinkled hands. (8)

23 and **25** The result of being talked about, as they say, within listening distance. (7)

24 Beat up on the first of 15 across in what gets thrown away. (6)

25 See 23

28 He put on a good act when I got in with the lad who asked for more. (7)

29 It might help otalgia, but Wyatt has a rod that needs fixing. (7)

30 and **31** Tripping on the floor with this? The globe is awesome! (5,9)

DOWN

1 and **15** Is it a big wise bird that looks like the devil, almost? (5,6,3)

2 Heavens! That's the location of one of Goldilocks's pals! (3,4)

3 It's not hard to find the exit—which is a simple way to get off the hook. (4,3,3)

4 10, in rising, with a lot of pizzazz—changing into an electrically charged group of atoms. (8)

5 Those who gawk at something finding their pagers out of order. (6)

6 Stream at this and call for a summons! (4)

7 When rising, suits a rather boggy place finally, but it might take an application of starch to do it. (7)

8 Where you find this puzzle may be typical of them, but they could have plenty of ammunition. (9)

14 What the hostess might serve to start 25—just an article when the atmosphere rises, which could make you feel pretty rotten! (10)

15 See 1 down

17 When the mail gets sorted, it's on your head, as some say—but may be just part of the meal... (4,4)

19 ...at least one portion of the meal being applicable. (7)

21 One who goes up with Pa and "that lady" a little way, to find the college. (7)

22 A governor of Mecca who is almost a lawman in the States. (6)

26 A subject of conversation of the optic sort. (5)

27 An early inhabitant of England sounds like one of the chosen few. (4)

SOLUTION TO PUZZLE NO. 3019

S	I	T	D	O	W	N		M	U	L	C	H	E	S
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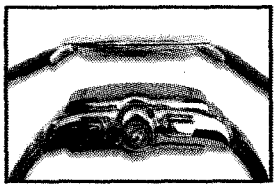
The Swiss Breakthrough!! The Thinnest Calendar Watch Ever Made



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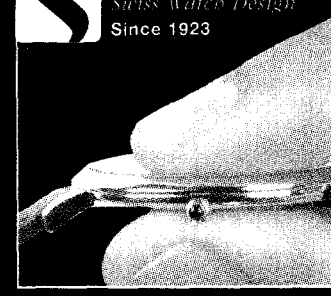
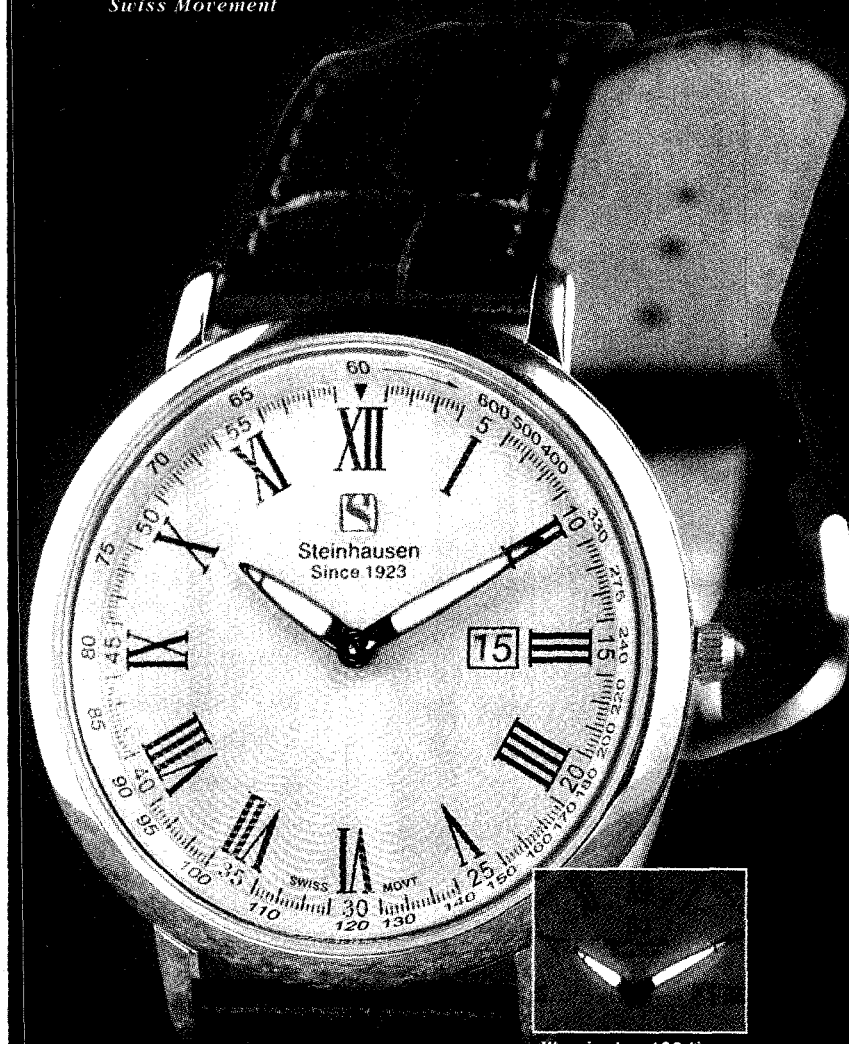
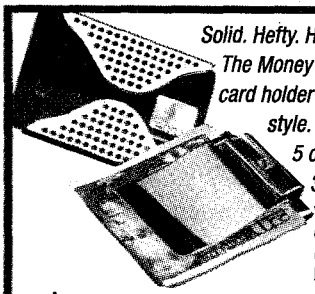


Steinhausen's Dunn Horitzon watch is significantly thinner compared to others



Illuminates 100 times brighter than other watches



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CWA says, don't make the mistake of thinking that Verizon Wireless employees have union representation just because workers do at the parent company, Verizon Communications.

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To Learn More: Watch a short video that contrasts fair treatment of workers by Cingular with the anti-union tactics of Verizon Wireless. To view "A Tale of Two Companies," go to **www.taleof2companies.com**.

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